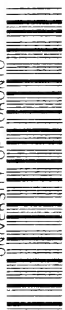


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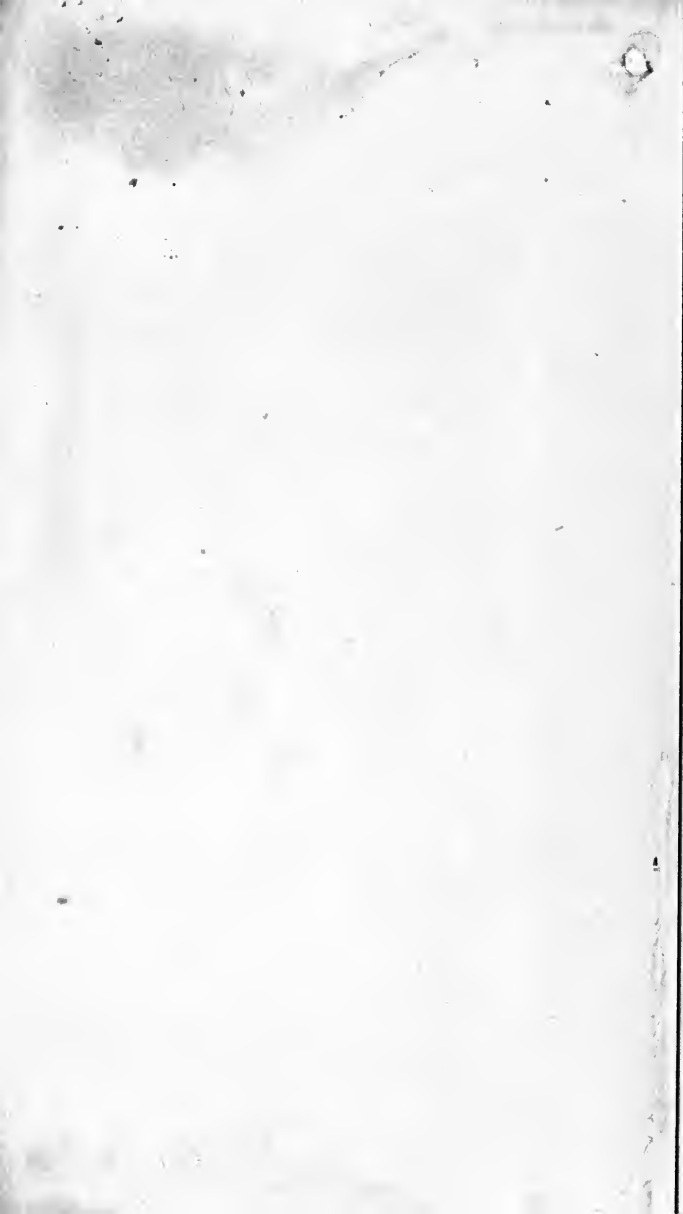
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A N  
E S S A Y  
O N  
T A S T E.

By ALEXANDER GERARD, D.D.

Professsor of DIVINITY in the MARISCHAL  
College of *Aberdeen*.

2

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By ALEXANDER GERARD, D.D.  
Professor of DIVINITY in the MARISCHAL  
College of *Aberdeen*.

THE SECOND EDITION,

With Corrections and Additions.

TO WHICH ARE ANNEXED,  
THREE DISSERTATIONS  
On the same SUBJECT,

B Y

Mr DE VOLTAIRE,

Mr D'ALEMBERT,

A N D

Mr DE MONTESQUIEU.

*Omnes tacito quodam sensu, sine ulla arte aut ratione, quæ sint in artibus ac rationibus recta et prava dijudicant.*

Cic. de Oratore, lib. 3.

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and J. BELL, *Edinburgh*.

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
JOHN EARL OF BUTE,  
&c. &c. &c.

CHANCELLOR OF THE MARISCHAL  
COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY OF  
ABERDEEN:

EMINENT FOR  
ELEGANCE OF TASTE, AND THE PA-  
TRONAGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES:

DISTINGUISHED BY  
THE MOST IMPORTANT PUBLIC SERVICES  
TO HIS KING AND HIS COUNTRY;  
WHICH WILL COMMAND THE HIGH  
ESTEEM, AND ENGAGE THE WARM  
GRATITUDE, OF LATE POSTERITY:

THE FOLLOWING ESSAY IS,  
IN SINCERE EXPRESSION OF THE AU-  
THOR'S SENSE OF HIS LORDSHIP'S AC-  
COMPLISHMENTS AND VIRTUES,

WITH PROFOUND RESPECT,

INSCRIBED BY  
HIS LORDSHIP'S  
MOST OBLIGED,

MOST DEVOTED, AND  
MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,

ALEX. GERARD.

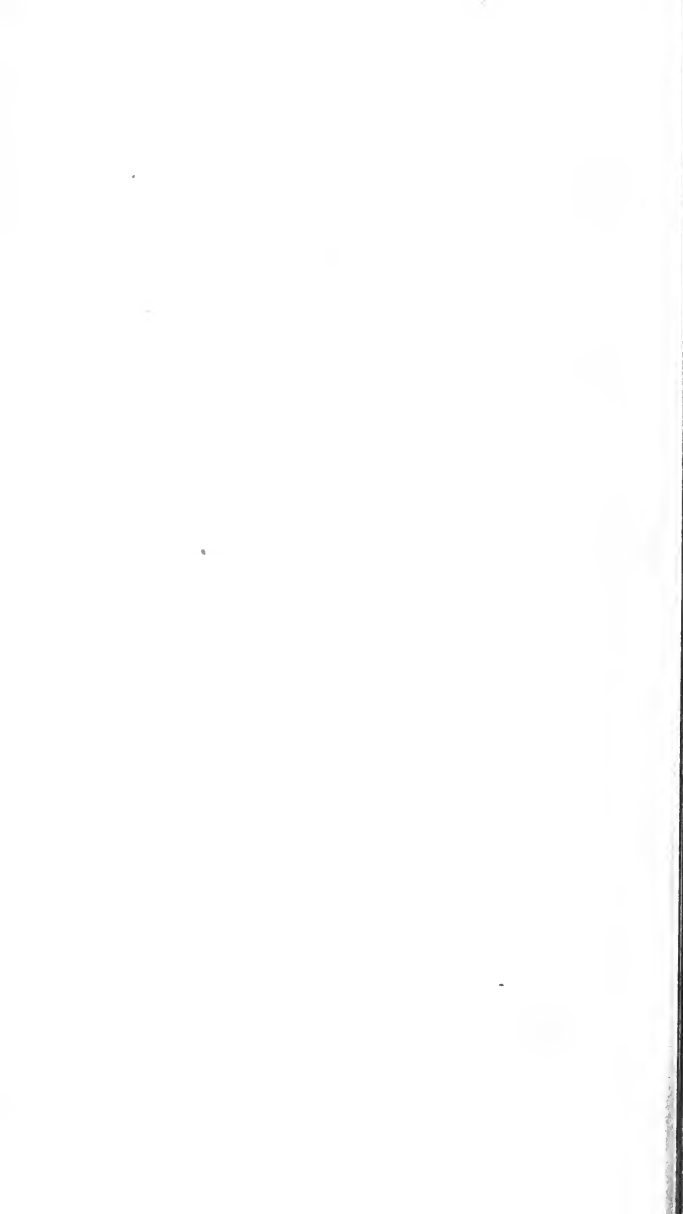


## A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

**T**HE EDINBURGH SOCIETY for the encouragement of arts, sciences, manufactures, and agriculture, proposed, in the year 1755, a gold medal to the best ESSAY on TASTE; and, not having assigned it that year, repeated the proposal in 1756. This determined the author to enter on the following inquiry into the nature of taste; the general principles of which only he presented to the Society, suspecting, that the whole might exceed the limits which they had fixed, by requiring an essay. The judges appointed for that subject having been pleased to assign the premium to him, he is encouraged to offer the whole, as it was at first composed, to the public.

Aberdeen, Sept. 28.

1 7 5 8.





# Notes

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 " 236 Cornelia  
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*Pag. lin.*

- 11. 1. *note ult. for Δῖ, read Δῖ'*
- 25. 5. *note ult. for ἐπίκλυρος, read ἐπίκλυρος*
- 30. 2. *note, for fiet, read fiet*
- 59 26. *after present, for a semicolon, place a comma.*
- 93. 10. 11. *for considerably, read considerable*
- 166. 2. *for allusion, read abusion*
- 193. 15. *for other, read another*

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(X See Hutcheson on Imagina-  
tion)

A N

E S S A Y

O N

T A S T E.

**A** FINE taste is neither wholly the gift of *nature*, nor wholly the effect of *art*. It derives its origin from certain powers natural to the mind; but these powers cannot attain their full perfection, unless they be assisted by proper culture. Taste consists chiefly in the improvement of those principles which are commonly called the powers of imagination, and are considered by modern philosophers as *internal* or *reflex senses*\*, supplying us with finer and more delicate perceptions,

\* Mr Hutcheson was the first who considered the powers of imagination as so many senses. In his *Inquiry concerning beauty and virtue*, and his *Essay on the passions*, he calls them *internal senses*. In his later works, he terms them *subsequent* and *reflex senses*; *subsequent*, because they always suppose some previous perception of the objects about which they are employed; thus a perception of harmony presupposes

perceptions, than any which can be properly referred to our external organs. These are reducible to the following principles; the senses of novelty, of sublimity, of beauty, of imitation, of harmony, of ridicule, and of virtue. With the explication of these, we must, therefore, begin our inquiry into the nature of *taste*. We shall next endeavour to discover, how these senses co-operate in forming *taste*, what other powers of the mind are combined with them in their exertions, what constitutes that refinement and perfection of them which we term *good taste*, and by what means it is obtained. And, last of all, we shall, by a review of the principles, operation, and subjects of *taste*, determine its genuine rank among our faculties, its proper province, and real importance.

poses our hearing certain sounds, and is totally distinct from merely hearing them, since many who enjoy the external sense of hearing in the greatest perfection, have no musical ear; *reflex*, because, in order to their exertion, the mind reflects upon, and takes notice of some circumstance or mode of the object that was perceived, besides those qualities which offered themselves to its attention at first view. Thus the perception of any object does not give us the pleasant sentiment of novelty, till we have reflected on this circumstance, that we never perceived it formerly. In the following essay, the terms *internal sense* and *reflex sense* are used promiscuously.

## P A R T I.

Taste resolved into its simple principles.

### S E C T. I.

*Of the sense or taste of novelty.* ~~XX~~

**T**HE mind receives pleasure or pain, not only from the impulse of external objects, but also from the consciousness of its own operations and dispositions. When these are produced by external objects, the pleasure or the pain which arises immediately from the exertions of the mind, is ascribed to those things which give occasion to them. We have a pleasant sensation whenever the mind is in a lively and elevated temper. It attains this temper when it is forced to exert its activity, and put forth its strength, in order to surmount any difficulty: and if its efforts prove successful, consciousness of the success inspires new joy. Hence moderate difficulty, such as exercises the mind without fatiguing it, is pleasant, and renders the object by which it is produced agreeable. Even plainness and perspicuity becomes displeasing in an author, when it is carried to excess, and leaves no room for exercising the reader's

thought: and though great obscurity disgusts us, yet we are highly gratified by delicacy of sentiment, which always includes some degree of it, occasions a suspense of thought, and leaves the full meaning to be guessed at, and comprehended only on attention\*. The exercise of thought which moderate difficulty produces, is a principal source of the pleasure

\* Some critics have explained this gratification, either by supposing imaginary refinements of reflection, or by principles which are only consequences of the pleasure that attends the moderate exercise of thought. 'Ου πάντα ἐπ' ἀκριβέως δὲ μακρηγορεῖν, ἀλλ' ἔνια καταλιπεῖν, καὶ τῷ ἀκροατῇ συνιέναι, καὶ λογίζεσθαι ἐξ αὐτῶν· συνίης γὰρ τὸ ἐλ. λειψθὲν ὑπὸ σοῦ — γίνεται — ὑμηνέστερος· συνετὸς γὰρ ἑαυτῷ δοκῶ διὰ σέ, τὴν ἀφορμὴν παρειαχικήτα αὐτῷ τῷ συνιέναι· τὸ δὲ πάντα ὡς ἀνοήτῳ λέγειν, καταγινώσκοντι ἔοικε τῷ ἀκροστῷ. ΔΗΜΗΤ. ΦΑΛ. περὶ ἑρμην. σελ. σλ.' " L'homme " est naturellement si amoureux de ce qu'il produit, et cette " action de nostre ame qui contrefait la creation, l'e- " blouit, et la trompe si insensiblement et si doucement, " que les esprits judicieux observent, qu'un des plus " surs moyens de plaire, n'est pas tant de dire et de " penser, comme de faire penser, et de faire dire. Ne " faisant qu'ouvrir l'esprit du lecteur, vous luy donnez " lieu de le faire agir; et il attribue ce qu'il pense et " ce qu'il produit à un effet de son génie et de son " habileté: bien que ce ne soit qu'une suite de l'adresse de " l'auteur, qui ne fait que lui exposer ses images et luy " preparer de quoy produire et de quoy raisonner. Que si " au contraire on veut dire tout, non seulement on luy " offre un plaisir qui le charme, et qui l'attire, mais on " fait naître dans son cœur une indignation secrete, luy " donnant sujet de croire qu'on se délie de sa capacité." *Bouhours, La man. de bien pens. quatr. dial.*



we take in study and investigation of every kind: for though the utility of many subjects inhances our satisfaction, yet the former principle, without any aid from this, often renders very great labour, not only supportable, but agreeable. Witness the delight with which antiquaries bestow indefatigable pains on recovering or illustrating ancient fragments, recommended only by their age and obscurity, and scarce apprehended to be, on any other account, of great importance. This is in general the cause of our pleasure in all inquiries of mere curiosity.

NOT only the performance of actions, but also the conception of most objects, to which we have not been accustomed, is attended with difficulty. On this account, when *new* objects are in themselves indifferent, the efforts that are necessary for conceiving them, exalt and enliven the frame of the mind, make it receive a strong impression from them, and thus render them in some measure agreeable. When the objects are in themselves agreeable, these efforts heighten our satisfaction. A fine country or an agreeable prospect is doubly beautiful to a stranger. It gives considerable exercise to the mind, to observe every part of it, and to conceive the situation of the several objects which it includes. A fresh discovery in science, or a new performance in the arts,

gives greater satisfaction, when we become first acquainted with it, than ever after. The first time that we study a philosophical theory, the mind runs through it with eagerness, that it may get a view of all its parts; is constantly engaged in tracing the connexion of the arguments, in examining their force, in conceiving what objections can be formed against them; and is by this means affected with an agreeable agitation, which ceases after repeated perusals have rendered the theory familiar to us. A poem or a picture is examined with a similar ardour and unremitted exertion of mind, by a person who has not seen it formerly.

THOUGH a new object be so simple as to be conceived without any difficulty, there are some situations in which it will give exercise to the mind, and will, for this reason, be agreeable. It is extremely disagreeable, to be sunk into indolence and languor, without any thing to awaken our attention, or give play to our faculties. This state is almost unavoidable, when we are long confined to the contemplation of a single object, or when the same object recurs very often to our view. In this case, it soon becomes so familiar, that the impression which it makes upon the mind, is too faint to give it any exercise. Memory retains all the parts of the object so distinctly,  
that

that it outruns sense, and, before we have surveyed them, informs us, that we are perfectly acquainted with them already. We find ourselves cloyed, and immediately turn from the object with disgust. Any new object will, in this situation, be agreeable; it occurs opportunely to occupy the mind, when it was at a loss how to employ itself; it frees us from the pain of satiety and languor; it gives an impulse to the mind, and puts it in motion. This is always pleasant, but its pleasure is greatly augmented by the uneasiness from which it has relieved us. This is a pleasure which most men taste every day, by varying their studies, their business, or their recreations. When genuine elegance in furniture or architecture has been long the fashion, men sometimes grow weary of it, and imitate the Chinese, or revive the Gothic taste, merely for the pleasure they receive from what is unlike to those things which they have been accustomed to see. The pleasure of novelty is, in this case, preferred to that which results from real beauty.

IF there are some things, the novelty of which produces no degree of pleasure, this arises from their not at all enlivening the thought, or exercising the mind. If their novelty is even painful, it proceeds from their exciting some other sensation which destroys the pleasure naturally attendant on the novelty.

ty. The exercise of mind which the conception of new objects occasions, though it be pleasant in its own nature, renders a disagreeable object more disagreeable at first: for the most opposite sensations produced by the same cause, and existing in the mind at once, are easily transfused into one another, and, by their composition, form one more violent, which always follows the nature of the sensation that was most intense.

SOMETIMES the elevation and exertion of mind which springs from the mere difficulty of conceiving a new object, or from the liveliness of a new perception, is attended with surprise, which augments our delight or uneasiness, by farther enlivening the thought, and agitating the mind. For this reason, the poet and the orator, not only solicitously avoid sentiments and modes of expression which are trite and common, and search through all the stores of nature for images, figures, and illustrations, which have not been appropriated by their predecessors; but also study to contrive the structure of their compositions in such a manner, that the commonest thoughts and arguments may surprise by the unexpectedness of their introduction \*. Even the hi-

\* Est enim grata in eloquendo novitas et commutatio, et magis inopinata delectant. *Quint. Inst. Orat. lib. 8. cap. 6.*

storian, who is confined to known materials and facts, endeavours to give them the appearance of novelty, by the light in which he represents them, and by his own reflections on the causes, the effects, and the nature of the transactions which he relates. Novelty can bestow charms on a monster, and make things pleasant which have nothing to recommend them but their rarity.

IN like manner, any agreeable passion or emotion which a new object happens to produce, will run into the pleasant sentiment that naturally arises from its novelty, and will augment it. A new suit of cloaths gives pleasure to a child, by its being different from his former; it likewise excites his pride, and gives him an expectation of attracting the notice of his companions. It gratifies the vanity of a fine lady, to be among the first in a fashion; it seems to proclaim her rank, to distinguish her from the vulgar, and to command respect.

THE pleasure of novelty is sometimes also heightened by reflection. When the conception of an object is attended with very considerable difficulty, the pleasure which we feel in the exertion of mind necessary for overcoming this difficulty, is increased by the joy with which we reflect on our success in having surmounted

surmounted it. When objects are of such a nature that we reckon our acquaintance with them an acquisition in knowledge, the pleasure of their novelty arises in part from the satisfaction with which we reflect on our having made this acquisition. Both these circumstances, the consciousness of success, and the opinion of improvement, contribute to that delight which a mathematician enjoys, the first time that he comprehends a difficult and curious demonstration.

It may be farther observed, that novelty in the works of genius and art derives additional charms from another principle, to be explained afterwards, the ingenuity which it shows. To strike out a new track, to execute what was not attempted before, displays original genius, which we always observe with pleasure.

S E C T.

## S E C T. II.

Of the sense or taste of grandeur and sublimity.

**G**RANDEUR or sublimity gives us a still higher and nobler pleasure, by means of a sense appropriated to the perception of it; while meanness renders any object to which it adheres, disagreeable and distasteful. Objects are sublime, which possess *quantity*, or *amplitude*, and *simplicity*, in conjunction\*.

CONSIDERABLE *magnitude*, or largeness of extension, in objects capable of it, is necessary to produce sublimity. It is not on a small rivulet, however transparent, and beautifully winding; it is not on a narrow valley, though variegated with flowers of a thousand pleasing hues; it is not on a little hill, though cloathed with the most delightful verdure, that we bestow the epithet *sublime*: but on the Alps, the Nile, the ocean, the wide expanse of heaven, or the immensity of space uniformly extended without limit or termination †.

\* Most of the species of sublimity are explained, nearly from the principles here assigned, in *An essay on the sublime*, by Dr Baillie.

† Φυσικῶς πως ἀγόμενοι μὰ Δι' οὐ τὰ μικρὰ ῥᾶθρα θαυμάζομεν, εἰ καὶ διαυγῇ καὶ χρήσιμα· ἀλλὰ τὸν Νεῖλον, καὶ Ἰστρον, ἢ Ῥῆνον, πολὺ δ' ἔτι μᾶλλον τὸν Ἀκεανόν. ΔΙΟΓΕΝ. περὶ ὕψους. α.μημ. λε.

WE

WE always contemplate objects and ideas with a disposition similar to their nature. When a large object is presented, the mind expands itself to the extent of that object, and is filled with one grand sensation, which totally possessing it, composes it into a solemn sedateness, and strikes it with deep silent wonder and admiration: it finds such a difficulty in spreading itself to the dimensions of its object, as enlivens and invigorates its frame: and having overcome the opposition which this occasions, it sometimes imagines itself present in every part of the scene which it contemplates; and from the sense of this immensity, feels a noble pride, and entertains a lofty conception of its own capacity \*.

LARGE objects can scarce indeed produce their full effect, unless they are also *simple*, or made up of parts in a great measure similar. Innumerable little islands scattered in the ocean, and breaking the prospect, greatly diminish the grandeur of the scene. A variety of clouds, diversifying the face of the hea-

\* *Longinus* contents himself with resolving the sensation of sublimity into the *last* of these principles, without investigating the others, of which it is but a consequence: Φύσει γάρ πως ὑπὸ τᾶληδὺς ὕψους ἐπαίρεται τε ἡμῶν ἡ ψυχὴ, καὶ γαῦρὸν τι ἀνάστημα λαμβάνουσα πληρῶται χαρῆς καὶ μεγαλαυχίας. Περὶ ὕψ. τμη. ζ.



vens, may add to their beauty, but must take from their grandeur \*.

OBJECTS cannot possess that largeness which is necessary for inspiring a sensation of the sublime, without simplicity. Where this is wanting, the mind contemplates, not one large, but many small objects †; it is pained with the labour requisite to creep from one to another; and is disgusted with the imperfection of the idea with which, even after all this toil, it must remain contented. But we take in with ease one entire conception of a simple object, however large: in consequence of this facility, we naturally account it one: the view of any single part suggests the whole, and en-

\* It is not meant, that, in these cases, the sublimity of the ocean, or of the heavens, is destroyed; it is only asserted that it is diminished. A considerable degree of sublimity will remain, on account of the similarity that still subsists among the parts.

† Simplicity is recommended, by an ancient critic, as requisite to sublimity in painting, on the very principle here assigned, which must render its necessity universal, as it extends equally to every other subject. Νικήας δ' ὁ ζωγράφος ἔ τῷτο εὐθύς ἔλεγεν εἶναι τῆς γραφικῆς τέχνης οὐ μικρὸν μέρος, τὸ λαβόντα ὅλην εὐμεγέθη γράφειν, ἔ μὴ κατακερμαλίζειν τὴν τέχνην εἰς μικρά ΔΗΜΗΤ. ΦΑΛ περὶ ἐρμην. 55. It is on the same principle that Longinus accounts for the production of the sublime, by expressing in the singular, what is ordinarily expressed in the plural: Τὸ γὰρ ἐκ τῶν διηρημένων εἰς τὰ ἡνωμένα ἐπισυσφύσαι τὸν ἀριστὸν σωματοσυνδύετον. Περὶ ὕψ. τμη. κε.

ables fancy to extend and enlarge it to infinity, that it may fill the capacity of the mind.

MANY things are indeed denominated sublime, which being destitute of extension, seem incapable of amplitude, the first and fundamental requisite of the sublime. But such objects will be found, on examination, to possess qualities which have the same power to exalt the disposition of the observer. Length of duration; prodigious numbers of things similar united, or so related as to constitute a whole, partake of the nature of *quantity*, and, as well as extension, enlarge and elevate the mind which contemplates them. Eternity is an object which fills the whole capacity of the soul, nay exceeds its comprehension, and strikes it with astonishment and admiration. We cannot survey a vast army or navy, without being sensible of their grandeur; which arises, not so much from the largeness of the space they occupy, as from the number of men or ships which are in them united under one direction, and co-operate to a common end; the union and similitude of the parts adding *simplicity* to the *vastness* of their number. Hence too is derived the sublime of science, which lies in universal principles and general theorems, from which, as from an inexhaustible source, flow multitudes of collaries and subordinate truths.

BUT

BUT do we not attribute grandeur and sublimity to some things which are destitute of *quantity* of every kind? What can be more remote from quantity, than the passions and affections of the soul? Yet the most imperfect and uncultivated taste is sensible of a sublimity in heroism, in magnanimity, in a contempt of honours, of riches, of power, in a noble superiority to things external, in patriotism, in universal benevolence. To account for this, we must observe, that, as no passion can subsist without its causes, its objects, and its effects; so, in forming the idea of any passion, we do not satisfy ourselves with conceiving it as a simple emotion in the mind, but we run over in thought the objects about which it is employed, the things by which it is produced, and the effects by which it discovers itself. And as these always enter into our conception of the passion, and are often connected with quantity, they naturally render the passion sublime. What wonder that we esteem heroism grand, when, in order to imagine it, we suppose a mighty conqueror, in opposition to the most formidable dangers, acquiring power over *multitudes* of nations, subjecting to his dominion wide *extended* countries, and purchasing renown, which reaches to the extremities of the world, and shall continue through *all the ages* of futurity? What can be more truly great, than

the object of that benevolence, which, unconfin'd by the narrow limits of vicinity or relation, comprehends *multitudes*, grasps whole *large* societies, and even extends from pole to pole ?

WE shall but just observe, that the sublime passions, habitually prevailing in the temper, and uniformly displaying themselves in suitable expressions and effects, constitute dignity and sublimity of character.

IT must also be remarked, that whatever excites in the mind a sensation or emotion similar to what is excited by vast objects, is on this account denominated sublime ; it being natural to reduce to the same species, to express by the same name, and even frequently to confound together, those objects which we contemplate with the same or a like disposition. Hence the raging of the sea in a storm, and the loud roaring thunder, which inspire an awful sedateness, are termed sublime. Objects exciting terror are, for this reason, in general sublime ; for terror always implies astonishment, occupies the whole soul, and suspends all its motions.

IN like manner, we admire as sublime superior excellence of many kinds ; such eminence in strength, or power, or genius, as  
is

is uncommon, and overcomes difficulties which are insurmountable by lower degrees of ability; such vigour of mind as indicates the absence of low and groveling passions, and enables a person to despise honours, riches, power, pain, death; setting him above those enjoyments on which men generally put an high value, and those sufferings which they think intolerable. Such degrees of excellence, by an original principle of the mind, excite wonder and astonishment, the same emotion which is produced by amplitude. A great degree of *quality* has here the same effect upon the mind, as vastness of *quantity*, and it produces this effect in the same manner, by stretching and elevating the mind in the conception of it.

WHAT has been just now said, suggests to us another principle which has often great influence in enabling inanimate things to produce the sensation of grandeur or sublimity. There being in the mind a natural proneness to admire a great degree of mental qualities, the admiration bestowed on them will be likewise extended to whatever we consider as an effect of them. Now, we are disposed to consider many great or sublime objects as effects; and those qualities which constitute their grandeur, lead us to infer greatness of power in

their cause, their magnitude necessarily requiring this for its production, and their simplicity raising our conception of the power, by seeming to imply, that they were formed at once. The greatness, for instance, of the works of nature, is considered as a striking indication of the omnipotence of their author. A vast fleet or army, suggests an high opinion of the power of the sovereign or the nation by whom they are provided or employed. In such cases, our admiration of the cause is excited by the view of the effect, and, being reflected back on the effect, heightens the sentiment of sublimity which it inspires, by means of the principles of the mind already pointed out. Thus, that mental excellence which was just now taken notice of as one species of sublimity, is, at the same time, a principal cause of the delight which we find in many other species of it.

BUT in order to comprehend the whole extent of the sublime, it is proper to take notice, that objects which do not themselves possess that quality, may nevertheless acquire it by *association* with such as do. It is the nature of association, to unite different ideas so closely, that they become in a manner one. In that situation, the qualities of one part are naturally attributed to the whole, or to the other part. At least, association renders

ders the transition of the mind from one idea to another so quick and easy, that we contemplate both with the same disposition; and are therefore similarly affected by both. Whenever, then, any object uniformly and constantly introduces into the mind the idea of another that is grand, it will, by its connection with the latter, be itself rendered grand. Hence words and phrases are denominated lofty and majestic. Sublimity of style arises, not so much from the sound of the words, though that doubtless may have some influence, as from the nature of the ideas which we are accustomed to annex to them, and the character of the persons among whom they are in most common use. This too is the origin of the grandeur which we ascribe to objects high and elevated in place; of the veneration with which we regard things in any direction distant; and of the superior admiration which is excited by things remote in time; especially in antiquity, or past duration\*.

BUT

\* The author of *A treatise of human nature* has very ingeniously reduced these phenomena into the principle of association; *b. 2. p. 3. § 8.* I shall collect the sum of his reasoning, so far as it is necessary to take notice of it here. 'Because we are accustomed every moment to observe the difficulty with which things are raised in opposition to the impulse of gravity; the idea of ascending always implies the notion of force exerted in overcoming  
this

BUT the fine arts present the most numerous examples of grandeur produced by association. In all of them, the sublime is attained chiefly by the artist's exciting *ideas* of sublime objects; and in such as are mimical, this quality is chiefly owing to our being led by the exactness of the imitation to form ideas and conceive images of sublime originals. 'Thought is a less intense energy than sense: yet *ideas*, especially when lively, never fail

this difficulty; the conception of which invigorates and elevates the thought, after the same manner as a vast object; and thus gives a distance above us much more an appearance of greatness, than the same space could have in any other direction. The sensation of amplitude which, by this means, comes to attend the interposed distance, is transferred to, and considered as excited by the object that is eminent and above us; and that object, by this transference, acquires grandeur and sublimity. And here we may observe, in passing, that this natural tendency to associate ideas of grandeur with things above us, is the reason why the term *sublime* is metaphorically applied to excellence of any kind, especially to that species of it which elates the mind with noble pride in the conception. To our transferring, in like manner, the interposed space, and its attendant sensation, to the distant object, is owing the veneration with which we regard, and the value which we set upon things remote in place. And because we find greater difficulty, and must employ superior energy, in running over the parts of duration than those of space, and in ascending through past duration than in descending through what is future; therefore we value higher, and contemplate with greater veneration, things distant in time than things remote in space, and the persons and objects of antiquity, than those which we figure to ourselves in the ages of futurity.'



to be contemplated with some degree of the same emotion which attends their original *sensations*; and often yield almost equal pleasure to the reflex senses, when impressed upon the mind by a skilful imitation.

GRANDEUR in works of architecture may, in some instances, arise from their largeness; for we generally estimate the magnitude of things, by comparison with those of the same species: and though no edifice is equal in quantity to many works of nature by no means accounted great; yet lofty palaces and pyramids, far exceeding the bulk of other buildings, possess a *comparative* magnitude, which has the same influence upon the mind as if they had been *absolutely* large. But still the principal source of grandeur in architecture is *association*, by which the columns suggest ideas of strength and durableness, and the whole structure introduces the sublime ideas of the riches and magnificence of the owner.

IN painting, sublimity is sometimes introduced by an artful kind of disproportion, which assigns to some well-chosen member a greater degree of *quantity* than it commonly has\*: but chiefly those performances are grand,

\* Thus, according to Hogarth, the inexpressible greatness

grand, which, either by the artful disposition of colours, light, and shade, represent sublime natural objects, and suggest ideas of them \*; or, by the expressiveness of the features, and attitudes of the figures, lead us to conceive sublime passions operating in the originals. And so complete is the power of association, that a skilful painter can express any degree of sublimity in the smallest as well as in the largest compass. It appears in the miniatures of Julio Clovio, as really as in the paintings of Titian or Michael Angelo.

THE sublime of those arts in which the instrument of imitation is language, must evi-

ness of the Apollo Belvidere arises from the uncommon length of the legs and thighs. *Analysis of Beauty, chap. II.*

\* It may be here observed, that, though the figures in painting can seldom have so great quantity as is sufficient of itself to produce sublimity; yet the comparative *magnitude*, and also the *simplicity*, of the figures, parts, and members, are among the principal means by which a work suggests sublime ideas, and thus becomes itself sublime. The preservation of magnitude and simplicity is therefore recommended as fundamental to sublimity, in the art of painting :

————— *Lævia, plana,*  
*Magnaque signa, —————*  
*Ex longo deducta fluant, non secta minutim*  
*Quippe solet rerum nimio dispersa tumultu*  
*Majestate carere gravi. —————*

*Fresn. de arte graph. ver. 108. 156. 204. 419.*

dently

dently arise entirely from association; because it is the only principle from which words derive their force and meaning. And in these arts, sublimity precisely considered, will be found resolveable into a very few general qualities.

THE poet, or the orator, is then possessed of this excellence, when the sentiments he utters, or the subjects he professedly describes, contain in themselves the sublime, either of nature, or of the passions and character: and the grander the originals are, the greater is the sublimity of the imitation; whence, in classing sentiments that are sublime, the first place is assigned by critics, to those which have a relation to the gods \*. When Homer would convey a sublime idea of DISCORD, he gives greatness of quantity to this imaginary person, <sup>by</sup> assigning her such prodigious stature, that, while she walks upon the earth, her head reaches to the heavens:

Ὀυρανῶ ἐσήριξε κάρη, ἔπ' ἐπὶ χθονὶ βαίνει.

IL. 8. ver. 443.

By the same contrivance, Virgil produces a great idea of FAME.

*Ingrediturque solo, et caput inter nubila condit.*

ÆN. l. 4. ver. 177.

\* Ἐννοιαὶ τοίνυν εἰςὶ σεμναὶ μάλιστα μὲν αἱ περὶ θεῶν, ὥς περὶ θεῶν λεγόμεναι. ἙΡΜΟΥ. περὶ ἰδεῶν.

The

The sublimity of the rival sentiments of the two Latin poets, with respect to Cato, arises in like manner from the grandeur of the subject, from the dignity of the character described :

*Et cuncta terrarum subacta*

*Præter atrocem animum Catonis.* HOR.

*Secretosque pios, his dantem jura Catonem.*

VIRG.

On account of the superior grandeur of the subject, the latter claims an undoubted preference. The former, indeed, derives additional force from the art of the composition, by means of which the first hint of an exception from Cæsar's power occasions a suspense of thought, a kind of anxious expectation, which, mixing with the sublime sensation, heightens it. Subjects thus grand in themselves, must bestow sublimity on a composition, whenever they are described in such a manner as conveys entire, or augments, the feeling which they naturally excite.

IF an author's main subject is destitute of innate grandeur, it may be rendered grand, by comparing, or some way associating it with objects naturally such. By the same means the real greatness of a subject is increased.

Hence

Hence metaphor, comparison, and imagery, are often productive of sublimity \*. Cicero exalts Cæsar's idea of clemency, by representing it as godlike †. Seneca ‡ gives a sublime idea of Cicero's genius, by comparing it with the majesty and extent of the Roman empire. The effect of the comparison is sometimes augmented, by the writer's insinuating the superiority of his subject to that with which he compares it, and artfully annexing some circumstances to the latter, which, without rendering it mean, (for that would destroy the effect of the comparison) yet depress it below the former. In this way Homer contrives to give a great idea of the Grecian army, by introducing Priam speaking magnificently of the armies which he had formerly seen in Phrygia, but at the same time acknowledging it far superior to them §.

\* ΔΗΜΗΤ. ΦΑΛ. πδ. πτ.

† Homines ad deos nulla re propius accedunt, quam salute hominibus danda. *Pro Ligar.*

‡ Illud ingenium, quod solum populus Romanus par imperio suo habuit. *Controv. lib. 1.*

§ "Ἦδη δὲ Φρυγίην ἐισήλυθον ἀμπελοέσσαν,  
 "Ενθα ἴδον πλείους Φρύγας. ἀνέρας ἀιολοπάλης,  
 Λαῆς Ὀτρῆος δὲ Μύδωνος ἀντιδίοιο,  
 "Οἱ ρα τότε ἑσρατόωντο παρ' ὅχθας Σαγγαρίοιο.  
 Καὶ γάρ ἐγὼν ἐπὶ κῆρος ἐὼν μετὰ τοῖσιν ἐλέχθην,  
 "Ἡματι τῷ, ὅτε ἦλθον Ἀμαζόνες ἀντιάνεραι·  
 "Ἄλλ' ἐδ' οἱ τότεσσι ἦσαν, ὅσοι ἐλίκωπες Ἀχαιοί.

ΙΑ. γ'. ver. 184.

By the same means, an Italian poet represents Venice, which he celebrates, as greater than Rome :

*Si pelago Tyberim præfers, urbem adspice utramque ;*

*Illam homines dices, hanc posuisse deos.*

SANAZAR.

Venice becomes grand by the metaphorical use of *pelagus*, and by the relation which it is said to bear to the gods ; and its grandeur is increased by comparison with Rome, acknowledged great, but, at the same time, purposely degraded, by the opposition of *Tyber* to *pelagus*, and its relation to men. The power of imparting sublimity to objects which naturally have it not, by giving them a relation to others, is an advantage peculiar to the arts which imitate by language ; for the rest can attain the sublime, only by copying such objects as are themselves possessed of that quality\*.

\* It is perhaps necessary to repeat, that we here intend only the sublime precisely considered ; for the term is often used to signify any great excellence of composition. It is thus defined by Longinus : *ὡς ἀκρότης ἢ ἑξοχή τις λόγων ἐστὶ τὰ ὑψηλὰ*. In this latitude he explains it, treating of the nervous, the vehement, and even the beautiful and elegant.

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THE principles which we have laid down explain also the sublime of music: it seems to be derived in part from the length and the gravity of the notes; the former constituting a kind of amplitude to the ear; the latter contributing to that composure and sedate expansion of the mind which attends the perception of sublimity: and it is then completed, when the artist, by skilfully imitating the sublime passions, or their objects, inspires these passions into his hearers, and renders them conscious of their operation.

IN order to account farther for sublimity in the works of art, we may observe, that this quality leads us to conceive the ingenuity, the skill, the abilities of the artist, and to conceive them with admiration. This admiration mixes with the sentiment produced by the qualities of the work itself, and improves and heightens that sentiment. This is a cause common to all the instances in which the productions of the fine arts inspire a perception of sublimity.

IT is proper to observe here, that things may be destitute of grandeur, and yet not be accounted low or mean; but may, on the contrary, possess other qualities which gratify us highly in a different way. It is only when grandeur is requisite and expected,

that the mere absence of it produces meanness. Thus a remarkable defect in quantity, in comparison with things of the same kind; a resemblance in individuals of a superior species to the orders below them; or the defect of sublimity in compositions of art or genius which propose to imitate originals, or treat subjects, confessedly noble, gives us distaste, and inspires contempt. Meanness arises often likewise from association, when low and groveling ideas are suggested; as, when images and similes taken from mean objects, are applied to an important subject. Thus also, words and phrases become mean, when they excite mean ideas, either by their proper signification, or by their being used only by those of inferior rank.

## S E C T.



### S E C T. III.

*Of the sense or taste of Beauty.*

**B**EAUTIFUL objects are of different kinds, and produce pleasure by means of different principles of human nature. NB

THE first species of beauty is that of *figure*; and belongs to objects possessed of *uniformity*, *variety*, and *proportion*. Each of these qualities pleases in some degree; but all of them united give exquisite satisfaction. ✓

FACILITY in the conception of an object, if it be moderate, gives us pleasure: the mind thinks well of itself, when it is able to form its conception without pain or labour. This constitutes the value of perspicuity of thought and language; which is agreeable in opposition to obscurity, as this occasions an uneasy search into the meaning of the parts, or the tendency of the whole, which requires greater labour than we are willing to bestow. Hence too it is that *uniformity* and *simplicity* become agreeable. Objects endued with these qualities enter easily into the mind: they do not ✓ distract our attention, or hurry us too fast from

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from

from one scene to another: each part is distinctly and strongly conceived: the view of a part suggests the whole, and, impelling the mind to imagine the rest, produces a grateful exertion of its energy.

ACCORDINGLY, in all the beautiful works of nature, uniformity is preserved in the general appearance of the correspondent parts. And though a perfectly accurate regularity is avoided, both in natural effects and in the fine arts; yet so much of it must be retained, as to keep the variety from degenerating into perplexity and confusion. Regular figures are in general preferred to irregular; and such as have parallel sides to such as have not. Equality is requisite to the beauty of every piece of painting \*. Even when a perfect similarity in the appearance of the counterparts seems to be studiously shunned, as in a side-view of a human face, the attitude of the body, or the profile of a building; yet still it must be so contrived, that though it

\* *Altera pars tabulæ vacuo ne frigida campo,  
Aut deserta fiet, dum pluribus altera formis  
Fervida mole sua supremam exurgit ad oram.  
Sed tibi sic positis respondeat utraque rebus,  
Ut si aliquid fursum se parte attollat in una,  
Sic aliquid parte ex alia confurgat, et ambas  
Æquiparet, geminas cumulando aqualiter oras.*

*Fresn. de art. graph. ver. 145.*

does

does not exhibit a *sensation*, it may notwithstanding, according to the rules of perspective, suggest the *idea* of exact uniformity. To bestow simplicity upon a multitude of separate phænomena, the philosopher traces them up to common qualities, and general causes; and it is only when he has done so, that the beauty of science begins \*.

BUT uniformity, when perfect and unmixed, is apt to pall upon the sense, to grow languid, and to sink the mind into an uneasy state of indolence. It cannot therefore alone produce pleasure, either very high, or of very long duration. *Variety* is necessary to enliven it. Where this is wanting, uniformity degenerates into dull formality. Variety in some measure gratifies the sense of novelty, as our ideas vary in passing from the contemplation of one part to that of another. This transition puts the mind in action, and gives it employment, the consciousness of which is agreeable †.

IN

\* Uniformity and simplicity are, strictly speaking, distinct ideas; the former implying the similarity of the correspondent parts; the latter, the sameness of unlike parts in the whole object. But as both please by the same principle, it was judged unnecessary precisely to distinguish them here.

† *Intricacy*, which often greatly contributes to beauty, may be considered as a species of *variety*; at least, its agreeableness

✓ IN the works of nature we find variety studiously sought after ; as in the uneven surface of the globe ; the infinity of shapes and hues in the flowers that adorn it ; the intricate windings of rivers ; the wildnesses of nature, which we even set ourselves to copy by art ; and in ten thousand other instances. To procure it, the architect enriches his buildings with ornaments of different forms. In all works of taste, too great uniformity is avoided by numberless graceful attitudes, by varying of members, and by contrasting the parts\*.

WERE

agreeableness is derived from the same cause ; and variety is most naturally combined with uniformity, intricacy with simplicity.

- \* Inque figurarum cumulis non omnibus idem  
Corporis inflexus, motusque ; vel artibus omnes  
Conversis pariter non conitantur eodem ;  
Sed quadam in diversa trahant contraria membra,  
'Transverseque aliis pugnent, et cætera frangent.

*Fresn. de art. graph. ver. 137.*

So great is the power of variety in producing beauty, that an ingenious artist, who has lately *analysed* it, resolves almost the whole of it, not altogether without reason, into that principle, and defines the art of composing to be nothing else but " the art of varying well." He holds uniformity no further necessary, than it is requisite to convey the idea of rest or motion, without possibility of falling. But here he goes too far. It were easy to point out instances, where uniformity is studied, though it cannot have any degree of this effect : and he acknowledges that beauty resides only in a *composed* variety ; which necessarily implies a mixture of uniformity. He indeed sufficiently proves,

WERE the variety indeed boundless, the mind would be fatigued and pained with continual shifting from part to part, without the prospect of any end of its labour; it would be displeased and disgusted, when it found, that, after numberless efforts to conceive the object, the endless dissimilitude and perplexed composition of the parts still baffled its endeavours, and hindered it from perfecting its idea. A certain degree of uniformity must therefore be blended with the variety of objects; otherwise this variety, instead of producing moderate energy, would subject us to insurmountable toil, which would make our pleasure soon degenerate into pain.

✓ THESE two qualities, by thus moderating the effects of one another, increase the pleasure resulting from each; giving the mind at once the opposite gratifications of facility and active exertion, mixed with, and mellowing one another.

PROPORTION consists not so much in relations of the parts precisely measurable, as in a general aptitude of the structure to the end proposed; which experience enables us

proves, that uniformity is not the only, or the chief principle of perfect beauty. Yet it often by itself constitutes some degree of it; as in the straight and parallel sides of a canal.

instantaneously

instantaneously to perceive, better than any artificial methods can determine it. Its influence on beauty is therefore derived from *fitness* \*, a principle which will be illustrated presently.

A very small disproportion in any of the members of the human body produces deformity. The least deviation, in the productions of the fine arts, from the natural harmony of the parts, always occasions a blemish.

THERE is another kind of *proportion*, at least not wholly dependent on utility, which is preserved in the appearances of things, when none of the parts are so small, in respect of one another, and of the whole, as to disappear through their smallness, while we contemplate the whole; and when none of them are so large, that, when we fix our view on them, we cannot distinctly perceive at the same time their relation to the whole, and to the other parts. Figures, the sides of which are very numerous, lose a great part of the beauty which would arise from this variety, by the want of proportion between the sides and the diameter. Works in the Gothic taste, crowded with minute ornaments, fall as

\* See Hogarth's *Analysis of beauty*, chap. 11.

much short of perfect beauty, by their disproportion, as by their deviation from simplicity.

As nothing gives us greater pleasure than what leads us to form a lofty conception of our own faculties, so nothing is more disagreeable than what reminds us of their imperfection. On this account it is, that the want of this kind of proportion disgusts us. It leads us to entertain a low, and consequently ungrateful, opinion of our capacity, by rendering it impossible to form one entire distinct conception of the object. The variety of its parts may amuse us, and keep us from attempting to comprehend the whole ; and then, especially if it be joined with uniformity, it will yield us some degree of pleasure, and constitute an inferior and imperfect species of beauty. But still proportion is necessary for perfecting the beauty, and fully gratifying a correct and improved taste.

THUS the absence of any one of these ingredients, the want either of uniformity, of variety, or of proportion, diminishes the beauty of objects : but where all of them are in a great measure wanting, deformity must prevail. Figures may be desirable or valuable on other accounts ; but without these qualities they cannot be beautiful.

THERE

THERE is another cause, besides those already mentioned, which contributes greatly to render each of these qualities, uniformity, variety, and proportion, agreeable, and to render the combination of them a source of high delight. It is, that they are all indications of design, wisdom, and contrivance; qualities of mind which we never fail to survey with pleasure. When we behold uniformity in a work, we naturally conclude, that it could not be the effect of chance, and that it could scarce be formed without intention. When we behold variety in a work, we are sure that it could not proceed from undesigning, and merely mechanical causes; and are disposed to suspect at least, that it is the production of a mind. But uniformity and variety artfully blended in the same object, by excluding both chance and mechanism, put it beyond doubt, that it springs from a mind; that design, and wisdom, and art, have been employed in uniting these opposite qualities so skilfully : we rest in the conclusion with perfect satisfaction; we take pleasure in conceiving the excellence of the cause, and by this the delight is heightened which we find in beholding the effect that suggests that excellence. Proportion of every kind is an additional evidence of the wisdom of the cause, and indicates a higher degree of wisdom; and therefore it is a source of further pleasure in

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contemplating the effect. Thus the qualities which constitute beauty of form, suggest design, and lead us to infer art and wisdom in the cause. The judgment is natural, immediate, and inevitable. We conceive this character of the cause with pleasure; and we ascribe this pleasure to the visible objects which led us to conceive, and to infer that character. This pleasure is in itself a species of admiration, and therefore akin to the sentiment of sublimity; but being occasioned by qualities in the object which produce a soft and tender sensation, it is modified by that sensation, and assumes its character; it renders it more intensely pleasant, but does not alter its nature: on the contrary, it is altered by it; it acquires that tenderness and softness which is peculiar to the perception of beauty, and which distinguishes it from the more elevated emotions of the soul.

UTILITY, or the *fitness* of things for answering their ends \*, constitutes another species of beauty, distinct from that of figure. It is of so great importance, that though *convenience* is sometimes, in minuter instances, fa-

\* This, which is the principle of a distinct order of beauty, is confounded with uniformity, which is but one ingredient in that of figure, by Croufaz; *Traité du Beau*, passim.

crificed to *regularity*; yet a great degree of inconvenience generally destroys all the pleasure which should have arisen from the symmetry and proportion of the parts. It is the peculiar excellence of nature's works, that, at least in the noblest of them, the most perfect fitness for their respective ends is united and rendered consistent with the greatest elegance of form †. We pay a very great regard to fitness, and utility, in establishing the standard of beauty and proportion in the several kinds. And, though the most perfect art falls infinitely short of nature, in combining the useful with the regular; yet none of its productions is reckoned a masterpiece, in which these excellencies do not meet ‡; and to obtain utility, forms of inferior beauty are, for particular purposes, constantly preferred, even where beauty is far from being neglected. The cube, not any of the more varied polygons, is chosen for a pedestal, on account of its stability. Utility has determined, though with considerable latitude, the dimensions and general form of most instruments and works, without adhering to which, the greatest

† In plerisque rebus incredibiliter hoc natura est ipsa fabricata, — ut ea quæ maximam utilitatem in se continerent, eadem haberent plurimum, vel dignitatis, vel sæpe etiam venustatis. Cic. de Orat. lib. 3.

‡ Cic. ibid. ΞΕΝΟΦ. Απομνημ. βιβ. 2'.

profusion of ornament cannot render them beautiful in the kind. Unfitness renders ornaments displeasing when wrong applied, which, in their proper place, might be truly elegant. The splendor of a single figure in history-painting will but augment its faultiness, if it takes off the eye from what ought to be the principal, and obstructs the effect which should be produced by the whole. In composition, the most refined reflections, the most elaborate descriptions, the warmest pathos, displease, if they break the unity, if they do not promote, much more if they retard the main design, to which all the parts should be subordinate.

*Sed nunc non erat his locus*————

The impropriety of their position wholly defaces their intrinsic beauty. In general, it is from the end and design of works of genius that their peculiar rules must be deduced: this directs the author in the choice, disposition, and embellishment of the parts: and by this the critic must regulate his judgment. It is from the relation which they bear to different ends, that narration, poetry, and eloquence, are subject to very different laws: and from the same source is derived the diversity of the rules belonging to the subordinate branches of each. Could fitness be

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dispensed.

dispensed with, a collection of fine sentiments and figures cloathed in agreeable language, might fully gratify our taste, however unconnected they were with one another.

THAT we may comprehend the nature of that pleasure which is produced by fitness, it must be observed, that, whenever we discover in effects a greater degree of uniformity, or well adapted complication, than could be expected from the laws of chance; especially when we recognise a fitness for answering an important end; we then infer, not only intention, but art and skill in the cause: which implying mental excellence and perfection, the view of it gives a noble satisfaction; as, on the other hand, faultiness of contrivance, by suggesting imperfect skill, and want of genius, displeases us greatly. When therefore we see a work, it leads us by a natural association to conceive its end; prone to comparison, we examine the propriety of the parts in relation to this end; if any of them are prejudicial to it, we are disgusted with the want of skill which this imperfection betrays. Further, we dwell in imagination on the inconveniences which must arise from the unfitness of the structure; we form strong ideas of them, which produce almost the same uneasy sentiments and passions as if we actually experienced them; and by this mean they  
often

often obliterate all the pleasing impressions which the other qualities of the object might have caused. But when, on examination, the fitness of all the parts appears, the satisfaction with which we think on the skill and ingenuity thus displayed, communicates itself to the effect so closely connected with it by causation; and, besides, we sympathetically enter into a strong feeling of the delight which must attend the possession or use of what is so well designed and executed.

THE beauty of *colours* is entirely distinct ✓ from both the former, and pleases us from principles wholly different. Colours being nothing else but various degrees and modifications of light, [some of them are less hurtful to the organs of sight than others; and are, on that account, in some instances approved as beautiful.]

SOME colours again, by their *splendor*, afford a lively and vigorous *sensation*, which gratifies us, by producing a chearful and vivacious disposition of mind in contemplating them.

BUT the beauty of colours is, in most instances, resolveable into *association*; those being approved, which, either by a natural resemblance, or by custom, or opinion, intro-

duce and are connected with agreeable ideas of any sort; and those being disapproved, which have any way become related to disagreeable ones. The verdure of the fields is delightful, not only by being inoffensive to the eye, but chiefly by its suggesting the pleasant idea of fertility. Heath in bloom would form a carpet agreeable enough to sight, if we could separate from its appearance the idea of the barrenness of the mountains and wilds which it covers. In dress, colours are either beautiful or the contrary, according to the nature of the idea which they lead us to form of the station, sentiments, and character of the wearer.

IN some cases, a particular dress, in consequence of established manners, suggests to the generality nearly the same idea. Wherever this *general* connexion takes place, it forms a kind of standard in dress, for persons in certain stations or professions. We come to perceive a propriety in conforming to it; and we are displeased with the indecency of deviating remarkably from it.

WHEN the idea suggested by dress is different in different persons, so also is the relish for the colour; what suggests to one a liveliness and vivacity of turn, gives another the idea of gaudiness and levity; the same dress  
may

may convey to some the idea of gravity and sedateness, to others that of dullness and austerity.

COLOURS as applied in painting, come under consideration here only in respect of their delicacy or vivacity; which, however estimable, are not yet of so great importance, as the power they have of representing grandeur, or beauty of figure, or of exhibiting solid bodies, by such an artful and ingenious imitation, as itself delights us in a way hereafter to be explained.

THE beauty of colours may be heightened by the addition of *variety*; a circumstance which bestows some charms on the most irregular mixture of them, provided they be of themselves agreeable; especially if they be so disposed as to set off to advantage the separate brightness or beauty of each other.

THERE is perhaps no term used in a looser sense than *beauty*, which is applied to almost every thing that pleases us. Though this usage is doubtless too indefinite, [we may, without a faulty deviation from precision, apply this epithet to every pleasure which is conveyed by the eye, and which has not got a proper and peculiar name; to the pleasure we receive, either when an object of sight suggests

suggests pleasant ideas of other senses, or when the ideas suggested are agreeable ones formed from the sensations of sight, or when both these circumstances concur. In all these cases, beauty is, at least in part, resolveable into association.

THE first method of effecting beauty, we have already seen exemplified in colours, which are themselves objects of sight introducing pleasant ideas not derived from sight. Thus also the structure of a human face often indicates good mental dispositions, which are not only themselves approved as virtuous, but, by being approved, diffuse a beauty over the countenance in which they are imprinted: but bad affections, expressed in the look, throw deformity upon the finest features.

IN the second way is produced the only beauty of thought or sentiment which comes properly under the present head; that beauty which arises, when the subject described is agreeable to sight, as light, flowers, fields, meadows, groves; or when it is illustrated by images from things that are in this manner agreeable. This is one great part of the beauty of pastoral, and enters in some degree into every kind of poetry\*.

\* The other qualities which render sentiments beautiful or agreeable, as metaphor, fable, antithesis, morality, elevation, &c. belong to other classes.



3) To the third cause, or the union of both the former, imitations of *beautiful* originals by figure and colour, owe their beauty. It is observable, that the arts which use these instruments have greater advantages for imitating beauty than they have for imitating sublimity. This they can represent, as we have seen, only by suggesting *ideas* of grand objects; but the copies would not, if considered as originals, be grand; since they are almost ever destitute of magnitude, its most essential requisite. [But imitations of beautiful originals, independent of their resemblance to these, are beautiful; since they cannot otherwise exhibit the beauties of the originals to the thought, than by their possessing them in some degree: and often they possess them as perfectly as their archetypes. A statue has the same regularity and proportion as its original. A painting may equal the object which it represents, not only in symmetry and propriety, but in colour.]

THE classes of beauty which we have been explaining, are distinct in their principles, though, by reason of the similitude of their feelings, they are reduced to the same *genus*. But they are often in things, variously united, and by their union, they render our satisfaction more intense. In a fine face all the principles of beauty are combined. To an exact symmetry

metry and regular proportion of varied features, and parts nicely adapted to their several purposes, is superadded complexion, composed of white and red, colours beautiful in themselves, rendered still more so, by the artful manner in which they are disposed, and by their indicating health and freshness; and the grace of the whole is heightened by a quick expressiveness of aspect, which forces us instantaneously to perceive acuteness, sagacity, sedateness, sweetness, or the like amiable qualities, in the mind which animates the elegant form; while the approbation attending this perception is reflected back upon the face which gave occasion to it.

## S E C T.

## S E C T. IV.

*Of the sense or taste of Imitation.*

**E**XACTNESS and liveliness of imitation supply us with another pleasure of taste, which, as it has no peculiar name, is commonly expressed by that of beauty; and is by some termed *relative* or *secondary*, to distinguish it from the kinds above explained, which are called *absolute* or *primary*\*. We have a natural sense which is highly gratified by a designed resemblance, though there be nothing agreeable in the original. Similitude is a very powerful principle of association, which, by continually connecting the ideas in which it is found, and leading our thoughts from one of them to the other, produces in mankind a strong tendency to comparison. As comparison implies in the very act a gentle exertion of the mind, it is on that account agreeable. As a farther energy is requisite for discovering the original by the copy; and as this discovery gratifies curiosity, produces an agreeable consciousness of our own discern-

\* See Hutcheson's Inquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue. Treat. 1. sect. 4.

ment and sagacity, and includes the pleasant feeling of success ; the recognising resemblance, in consequence of comparison, augments our pleasure \*. And when an imitation is *intended*, our admiration of the skill and ingenuity of the artist diffuses itself over the effect from which that skill is inferred, and completes the delight which the work inspires.

HENCE the rapture with which a connoisseur beholds the capital performances of the eminent masters in painting or sculpture. Hence the main excellence of poetical or eloquent descriptions ; the characteristical perfection of which arises from the author's judiciously selecting the most essential and striking qualities of his subject, and combining them into such a picture as quickly raises in the reader, and strongly impresses on his mind, a lively idea of the original. The fundamental beauty of metaphor and allegory lies in their insinuating the analogies of things ; that of similitude and comparison, in their more explicitly proposing these analogies. By this they communicate fineness to a sentiment. Most of the figures and tropes of eloquence derive their

\* Διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο χαίρουσι τὰς εἰκόνας ὁρῶντες, ὅτι συμβαίνει θεωροῦντας μανθάνειν ἔσσυλλογίζεσθαι, τί ἕκαστον. ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤ. περὶ Ποιητικῆς, κεφ. δ'.

grace from their being so employed, as to correspond with the natural expressions, or the objects, of those passions and sentiments which actuate the orator, or which he would inspire into his audience. Improbability, which is a want of resemblance to natural things, always renders a fable or story less entertaining; and if the improbability be very great, or extend to the material parts, it often makes it wholly nauseous.

WHEN excellent originals are imitated, the copies derive their charms, not merely from exactness of imitation, but also from the excellence which they represent; and the gratification which these copies afford, may almost as properly be ascribed to beauty or sublimity as to imitation. As the beauty here is complicated in its principles, it will of consequence be also compounded in its effect, and will ravish the mind much more than either of its constituents alone. An Hercules, exhibiting proportion, strength, and fortitude, in perfection, must be a finer statue than the exactest imitation of a Theseus or Silenus. The works of Polygnotus, which represented beautiful objects, were doubtless more delightful than the pictures of Dionysius or Pauson \*, how-

\* Πολύγνωτος μὲν κρείττους, Παύσαν δὲ χείρους, Διονύσιος δὲ ὁμοίους ἔκαστε. ἈΡΙΣΤΟΤ. περὶ ποιητ. κεφ. β'.

ever skilfully they might represent ordinary or faulty objects. The ancient Greek, or the modern Italian painters, will always be preferable to the Flemish ; who, though they imitate *well*, do not make a judicious *choice* of such beauties of nature as deserve to be imitated \*. The Margites of Homer could not have given us so high entertainment as we receive from the Iliad. A comparison, however nicely suited to the subject, will please still more, if it be taken from what conveys no ideas but such as are noble and agreeable : and indeed, by suggesting such as are strongly the reverse, it will be sufficient to turn the most magnificent subject into ridicule.

BUT still the force of imitation is most conspicuous, when no other principles con-

\* In this particular the ancient artists were so careful, that they were not contented with imitating the most perfect *individuals* they could meet with ; but collecting the perfections of many, they formed one *general* idea more complete than could be drawn from any single real existence. "Ονπερ τρόπον ἔχουσιν τοῖς τὰ ἀγάλματα τέτοις διαπλάττουσιν, οἱ πᾶν τὸ παρ' ἑκάστοις καλὸν συναγόντες, κατὰ τὴν τέχνην ἐκ διαφορῶν σωμάτων ἀθροίσαντες, εἰς μίμησιν μίαν, κάλλος ἐν ὑγιῆς ἔχοντιον ἢ ἡρμοσμένον αὐτὸ αὐτῷ ἱεργάσαντο. ἔκ τιν' αὖ ἑυροῖς σῶμα ἀκριβὲς κατὰ ἀλήθειαν ἀγάλματι ὅμοιον. ΜΑΞ. ΤΤΡ. λογ. ζ'. Καὶ μὴν τὰ γε καλὰ εἶδη ἀρομοιῶντες, ἐπειδὴ ὁ βῆδον ἐνὶ ἀνθρώπῳ περιτεχῆν ἀμεμπτα πάντα ἔχοντι, ἐκ πολλῶν συναγόντες τὰ ἐξ ἑκάστου κάλλιστα, ὥτως ὅλα τὰ σώματα καλὰ ποιῶτε φάνεσθαι. ΞΕΝΟΦ. Απομνημ. βιβ. γ'.

cur to heighten its effect : for as it is then pure and unmixed, we cannot question, that the whole pleasure of the sentiment produced, is owing to it alone. Its power is indeed so great, that it not only, without the assistance of other principles, produces a considerable degree of pleasure ; but often recommends imperfect or faulty originals to the imitation of the artist, and makes him even give them the preference to others ; and renders things grateful when reflected by it, which would be very ungrateful if viewed directly. The rudest rocks and mountains ; the objects that in nature are most deformed ; even disease and pain, acquire beauty when skilfully imitated in painting \*. It is chiefly by copying imperfections and absurdities that mimicry and humour please. A perfect imitation of characters morally evil, can make us dwell with pleasure on them, notwithstanding the uneasy sentiments of disapprobation and abhorrence which they excite. The character of Iago is detestable, but we admire Shakspeare's representation of it. Nay, imperfect and mixt characters are, in all kinds of writing, preferred to faultless ones, as being juster copies of real nature. The pleasant

\* "Α γὰρ αὐτὰ λυπηρῶς ὀρῶμεν, τούτων τὰς εἰκόνας τὰς μάλιστα ἡκριβωμένας, χαίρομεν θεωρῶντες· οἷον θηρίων τε μορφὰς τῶν ἀγριωτάτων ἔ νεκρῶν. ἌΡΙΣΤ. περὶ ποιητ. κριτ. δ'.

sensation resulting from the imitation is so intense, that it overpowers and converts into delight even the *uneasy* impressions which spring from the objects imitated. There can be no stronger proof of the force of imitation in conferring on its effects the power of pleasing, than its rendering those passions agreeable, when excited by it, which, when produced in the natural way, are pure and unmixed pain. Suspense, anxiety, terror, when produced in tragedy, by imitation of their objects and causes, and infused by sympathy, afford not only a more serious, but a much intenser and nobler satisfaction, than all the laughter and joy which farce or comedy can inspire. When thus secondarily produced, they agitate and employ the mind, and rouse and give scope to its greatest activity; while, at the same time, our implicit knowledge that the occasion is remote or fictitious, enables the pleasure of imitation to relieve the pure torment which would attend their primary operation.

FROM what has been said, it is obvious, that the pleasure of imitation arises from a combination of causes. Besides the act of comparison, which is the same in all instances, the exactness of the resemblance, our discovery of it, and the art we conceive necessary



cessary for producing it, concur to make up our gratification.

EXACTNESS of resemblance is scarce farther approved, than as it evidences skill, and enables us to discover the original. Caravaggio is censurable for too closely following the life, as well as Gioseppino for wantonly deviating from it into fantastical extravagances. Among the ancient statuaries likewise, Demetrius is censured for being too studious of likeness, and sacrificing beauty to it; and is on this account reckoned inferior to Lyfippus and Praxiteles, who, at the same time that they excelled in producing likeness, carried it no farther than was consistent with beauty\*. Exactness of resemblance may be carried so far in any work of genius, as to degenerate into disagreeable fervility; and is easily dispensed with when the deviation from similitude appears to be the result of superior art. However, that instrument of imitation is doubtless the most perfect, which is capable of producing the most perfect likeness. Among the fine arts, this pre-eminence, in most subjects, belongs to sculpture; and more to painting,

\* Ad veritatem Lyfippum et Praxitelem accessisse optime affirmant. Nam Demetrius tanquam nimius in ea reprehenditur, et fuit similitudinis quam pulchritudinis amantior. *Quint. Instit. Orat. lib. 12. cap. 10.*

in subjects perfectly adapted to it, than to poetry.

BUT even the imperfection of the instrument of imitation may sometimes add merit to the effect. Though it renders the resemblance less accurate, this very circumstance enhances the pleasure, by producing a consciousness of greater sagacity in discovering the original ; at the same time that the production of likeness with unapt materials, implying greater difficulty, gives rise to an higher approbation of the ingenuity of the artist. In this respect painting is more artificial than statuary. For that reason a fine picture will inspire full as great pleasure as a statue. Its representing solid bodies, only by the disposition of light and shade, though itself a plane, is a proof of the highest skill. Could a person be formed to delicacy of taste, and yet kept from seeing a picture till he were adult, it is scarce conceivable what rapture he should feel, when he first discovered it to be but a plane variously shaded, after having firmly believed, that, like the objects to which he had been accustomed, it had itself the prominences and cavities which it represents\*.

And

\* Hence, in the celebrated contest between a painter and a statuary, concerning the merit of their arts, both argued

And as every difficulty of execution heightens our idea of the skill by which it is surmounted, not only the *importance* of the work, but also the *difficulty* of representing passion and character by figure and colour, increase the beauty of history-painting. In this view, poetry, imitating by instituted symbols, nowise resembling things, is, on most subjects, more imperfectly mimetic than the other arts: but this imperfection gives it a kind of merit, as that art is able, notwithstanding, to suggest very lively ideas of its objects. But what constitutes its unquestionable superiority to all its sister-arts, is its peculiar and unrivalled power of imitating the noblest and most important of all subjects, the calmest sentiments of the heart, and human characters displayed in a long series of conduct. For, in determining the comparative merit of the imitative arts, we must not only estimate the excellencies of the *instruments* or *manners* of imitation which they respectively claim; but also the moment of

argued from real principles of excellence; the statuary pleading the perfection of resemblance in his art; the painter the superior ingenuity which he discovered. The blind man gave the preference to the latter. The controversy cannot be determined, till it is previously fixed, which principle is, on the whole, preferable, exactness of resemblance, or skill in imitating. *QUEST*

what

what they imitate, and the value of the *ends* to which they are adapted \*.

\* All this must be taken under consideration, in order to explain the nature of any one of the fine arts : and it is only after the nature of each has been unfolded, that we can judge of their relative importance. Διαφέρουσι δὲ ἀλλήλων τρισὶν ἢ γὰρ τῷ γένει ἑτέροις μιμᾶσθαι, ἢ τῷ ἔτε-  
ρα, ἢ τῷ ἑτέρως, ὃ μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον. ἌΡΙΣΤ. περὶ  
ποιητ. κεφ. α΄.

SECT.

## S E C T. V.

*Of the sense or taste of Harmony.*

THE sense of harmony, which enables us to perceive a kind of beauty in sound, not only is conversant in all the arts which employ language, but itself lays the sole foundation of the art of music. By it the ear derives from its objects a pleasure similar to what the eye receives from forms. This pleasure is resolveable into the agreeableness of *single* sounds, and into the charms and energy of a skilful *complication* of them.

SINGLE sounds are either loud or low, acute or grave, slender or full, even or broken. To these qualities attention must be paid, if we would please the ear. If sounds are too *low*, they do not strike with force enough to gratify : if too *loud*, they confound us. Great *acuteness* lacerates the organ : and an excess of *gravity* renders the impression too dull and spiritless to please. *Exility* hinders sound from sufficiently filling the ear, and thence is attended with a perception of meanness and futility : but *full* and swelling notes, by occupying its whole expansion, acquire grandeur, and inspire delight. *Broken*  
sounds

sounds grate the ear, by their harsh inequalities: *smoothness* and evenness is necessary to prevent their being disagreeable.

HARMONY presupposes the agreeableness of the separate notes, but it is produced only by a *combination* of sounds. The different compositions of articulate sounds, added to the separate qualities of each, render some words harmonious, others harsh. Some articulate sounds do not easily concur; the transition from one configuration of the organs of speech to the other, is difficult and uneasy; and the hearer is led, by a delicate sympathy with the speaker, to feel this pain and labour. It is the frequency of such combinations that prevents euphony in any tongue; and renders some languages less smooth and harmonious than others. In sentences, periods, and discourses, the harmony, or the asperity, of style arises from the repetition of sounds and combinations separately agreeable or disagreeable: and the harmony is rendered more delightful, by the *variety* which the length of the composition admits. The importance of variety we shall acknowledge, if we but reflect how tiresome sameness of cadence is. The superior harmony of poetry is produced by the greater facility of its combinations, joined to a considerable degree of *uniformity*,  
and

and a regular *proportion* in time ; the proper method of obtaining which, in every language, determines its prosody : and the variety of the means to be employed for this end in different languages introduces a similar variety in the genius and measure of their verse.

WHENEVER our pleasure arises from a succession of sounds, it is a perception of a complicated nature ; made up of a *sensation* of the present sound or note, and an *idea* or remembrance of the foregoing, which, by their mixture and concurrence, produce such a mysterious delight, as neither could have produced alone. It is often heightened, likewise, by an *anticipation* of the succeeding notes. Hence it proceeds in part, that we are in general best pleased with pieces of music which we are acquainted with ; our understanding them more thoroughly counterbalances the power of novelty. Hence too it is, that we often acquire in time a fondness for what at first we did not highly relish ; the anticipation which repetition enables us to make of the succeeding note, supplying the defect in the sensation of the present ; and the idea of the past sound, when disunited from it, cementing them, as it were, and making them run into one another without difficulty or harshness. Sense, memory, and imagination, are thus conjunctively employed,

employed, in exhibiting to the interior organ a succession of sounds, which, properly disposed, especially in music, fill us with exquisite delight.

IT is observable, that the proper and pleasing disposition of sounds in *melody* bears a great resemblance, in its principles, to that arrangement of parts which constitutes the beauty of forms. It is a succession of notes, bearing to one another a regular *proportion* in time; so *varied* in their lengths and intervals\*, as to relieve satiety and tediousness; and at the same time so far *uniform*, that the transitions are all in themselves agreeable, such as are taken in by the ear with ease, and are subordinate to the key which governs the whole.

THE same principles are not less obvious in *harmony*; the superior delight of which springs from no other cause, but its possessing some of these qualities in greater perfection. The *uniformity* is preserved almost undiminished; the different parts being so combined, that no dissonance is occasioned by their multiplicity; but the concordant notes, melted into one an-

\* As the great force of *proportion* in time is evident from the universal attention that is paid to it in music of every kind; so the influence of *variety* of time appears particularly in the drum, the whole music of which is owing to it alone.

other,



other, strike the ear together without confusion or distraction. With this simplicity, an immense *variety* is made consistent; each separate part being a distinct series of artfully varied sounds; the melody of all the parts being enjoyed at once; the vibrations of the concords coinciding, not always, but at regular periods; the diversity of the concords and their successions producing a great diversity of harmonies; and the judicious intermixture of discords preventing the sense from being cloyed with symphony too long continued. At the same time, the *proportion* is rendered more conspicuous and artful, by its being preserved in all the parts; and a new kind of it is introduced, by their comparative strength. So great is the efficacy of these principles, that they alone produce very high pleasure, though no passion be excited by the music.

BUT still the chief excellence of music lies in its *expression*. By this quality, music is applied to a determinate subject: by this it acquires a fitness, becomes adapted to an end, and agitates the soul with whatever passion the artist chuses \*. Its power to operate on the

\* Hence different kinds of music may, in a consistence with their being all agreeable, answer different and even opposite purposes. Καλὸν μὲν ἐν πολέμῳ τὸ ὄρθιον, καλὸν δὲ ἐν συμποσίῳ τὸ παρόινιον· καὶ καλὸν μὲν Λακεδαιμονίοις τὸ ἔμβατήριον, καλὸν δὲ Ἀθηναίοις τὸ κύκλιον· ἢ καλὸν μὲν ἐν διώξει τὸ  
F ἔγχελευστικόν,

the passions is its most important virtue. And indeed, as all sensations and emotions resembling in their feeling, tend to introduce each other into the mind ; music, producing by its harmony a pleasant disposition of soul, renders us peculiarly prone to every agreeable affection. But it makes use too of other instruments. By the natural fitness of sound for accomplishing an imitation of, or association with, their objects and natural expressions, it infuses into the breast passions correspondent ; settles into calm serenity, melts into tenderness or pity, sinks into sorrow, soothes into melancholy, agitates with terror, elevates with joy, excites to courage, or enraptures with devotion ; and thus inexpressibly delights the soul.

ἑγχελευσικόν, καλὸν δὲ ἐν φυγῇ τὸ ἀνακλητικόν. Ἡ ΔΕΐΙΑ μὲν  
 πᾶσα μοῦσα, ἀλλὰ τὸ τῆς ΧΡΕΐΑΣ ἔχ ὅμοιον πᾶσιν. ΜΑΞ.  
 ΤΤΡ, λογ. ζ'.

SECT.

## S E C T. VI.

*Of the sense or taste of Ridicule.*

**I**N our enumeration of the simple powers which constitute taste, we must not omit that sense which perceives, and is gratified by the odd, the ridiculous, the humorous, the witty; and whose gratification often produces, and always tends to, mirth, laughter, and amusement. Though inferior in dignity to the rest, it is far from being despicable. It has a province, less important indeed than that of the others, yet both useful and agreeable. As they judge of grave and momentous subjects, it claims the sole jurisdiction over such as are more ludicrous.

Its object is in general *incongruity*, or a surprising and uncommon mixture of *relation* and *contrariety* in things. More explicitly; it is gratified by an *inconsistence* and *dissonance* of circumstances in the *same* object; or in objects nearly *related* in the main; or by a *similitude* or *relation* unexpected between things on the whole *opposite* and *unlike*.

JARRING and incongruous circumstances meeting in the same subject, form an absurdity,

with which we are apt to be diverted. Such are, cowardice in a boaster; ignorance in a man, of what he ought or pretends to know; dignity of any kind blended with meanness; sentiments or style in composition unfuitable to the subject. We are disposed to combine the parts of things into a whole, and to bestow upon them unity and intimate relation; we expect that they should be all consistent, suitable, and of a piece; and when we find them otherwise, we pronounce them ridiculous and absurd.

WE compare in this light the qualities, not only of the same subject, but also of subjects resembling, or otherwise nearly connected; and their contrariety affects us with a similar sensation. An opposition of characters and behaviour in different persons, especially of the same family or profession, often forms a diverting contrast. A passion, intense in its feeling, excited by a trifling cause, moves our laughter. A glaring disproportion betwixt the means and the end, when the means are either unequal to its attainment, or too laborious and expensive for its importance, is on the same principle ridiculous.

So excursive is the human fancy, that it continually leads us to compare things the most

most dissimilar; and as, on the former comparisons, the appearance of incongruity, so, on this, the discovery of unlooked-for likenesses, analogies, and relations, proves a source of pleasure and amusement. Inferior animals provoke our mirth, whenever they mimic the actions or sagacity of human creatures.

OBJECTS conceived to be in any of these ways incongruous, always gratify the sense of ridicule: but they may excite, at the same time, a more important feeling, which, by occupying the mind, prevents our attending to the incongruity, or extinguishes the sentiment thence resulting, as soon as it begins to rise. Enormous vice, though of all things the most incongruous to the natural system of our minds, is never esteemed ridiculous \*. Pain or misery is never in itself ridiculous; it can become such only by being accidentally connected with unsuitable circumstances, and by failing to excite pity so intense as may swallow up the ludicrous sensation.

\* Nec insignis improbitas, et scelere juncta, nec rursus miseria insignis agitata ridetur: facinorosos majore quadam vi, quam ridiculi, vulnerari volunt; miseros illudi nolunt, nisi se forte jactant. *Cic. de Orat. lib. 2.*

*WIT*, *humour*, and *ridicule* \*, are skilful imitations of odd and incongruous originals; which please us, not only by shewing them often more perfectly than we could have ourselves observed them, but also by superadding the gratification which results from imitation. This gratification is in its own nature serious, but is altered by the sentiment which attends the objects imitated, and only serves to heighten the contempt or amusement which they produce.

IN all these modes of imitation, the incongruity of the object, in itself, or in respect of the imagery used for illustrating it, is obvious. When Butler represents all ranks as intent on reforming the church and the state, he employs a surprising complication of wit and humour, in order to ridicule the epidemical

\* The author is well aware, that these three modes of imitation are widely different. It would be a very curious work to ascertain the peculiar nature of each, and to mark its real distinction from the rest. But, as the subject is in a great measure new, it could not be examined with accuracy, or so as to produce conviction of the justness of the theory, in a very narrow compass. And a large disquisition would be more than falls to its share in an inquiry concerning taste in general. It was therefore judged proper to be contented with pointing out what is common to wit, humour, and ridicule; and with giving examples which show that the theory here established extends to all of them.

distraction.

distraction. There is a wonderful mixture of dissonance and relation; *dissonance*, between the ordinary occupations of low mechanics and the difficult and noble office of legislation and political government; *relation*, not only as the persons thus inconsistently employed are the same, but also as their demands of redress are generally expressed in language adapted to the style of their respective vocations \*. The description of Hudibras's learning becomes witty, by the strange contrast between the dignity of the sciences ascribed to him, and the proofs of his understanding them, drawn from the lowest instances †.

A

- \* Then tinkers bawl'd aloud to settle  
Church-discipline, for patching kettle, &c.  
Botchers left old cloaths in the lurch,  
And fell to turn and patch the church, &c.  
And some for old suits, coats, or cloak;  
No surplices nor service-book.

*Hudib. part 1. cant. 2. ver. 536. &c.*

- † He was in logic a great critic,  
Profoundly skill'd in analytic, &c.  
He'd undertake to prove by force  
Of argument a man's no horse;  
He'd prove a buzzard is no fowl,  
And that a lord may be an owl;  
A calf an alderman, a goose a justice,  
And rooks committee-men and trustees, &c.

*Cant. 1. ver. 65.*

For

\* A hofe ufed for a cupboard, the basket-hilt of a fword for holding broth, a dagger for cleaning fhoes, or toafting cheefe to bait a moufe-trap, prefent ideas ftrikingly heterogeneous \*. A fword and a dagger are fo unlike to a knight-errant and his dwarf; a reftive horfe to an unmanageable body-politic; courage whetted by martial mufic, to ale turned four by thunder; the dawning of the day to the change of colour in boiling a lobster; torn breeches to a leaky vefel; that, when they are brought into view at once by comparifon, metaphor, infinuation, or allufion, their unexpected fimilitude in fome

For rhetoric, he could not ope

His mouth, but out there flew a trope, &c.

ver. 81. &c.

In mathematics he was greater, &c. ver. 119.—188.

- \* When of his hofe we come to treat,  
The cupboard where he kept his meat, ver. 303.
- His puiffant fword unto his fide,  
Near his undaunted heart was tied,  
With basket-hilt that would hold broth,  
And ferve for fight and dinner both, ver. 351.
- When it had ftabb'd or broke a head,  
It would fcrape trenchers, or chip bread,  
Toaft cheefe or bacon, though it were  
To bait a moufe-trap, 'twould not care.
- 'Twould make clean fhoes, and in the earth  
Set leeks and onions, and fo forth. ver. 381.

circumftances



circumstances produces mirth \*. In Addison's humorous representation of Tinsel's terror, it is the oddity and preposterous nature of the passion that diverts us; it is contrary to his professed principles and pretended fortitude, and it rises to a violent panic on a trifling occasion †. When Swift ridicules human foibles, whether he makes the attack by wit, or by humour, he paints their incongruity and absurdity. Attempts to produce learned volumes by the motions of a mechanical engine; to extract funbeams from a cucumber; to build houses downward from

\* This sword a dagger had his page,  
That was but little for his age:  
And therefore waited on him so,  
As dwarfs upon knights-errant do. *ver. 375. 920. 931.*  
Instead of trumpet and of drum,  
Which makes the warrior's stomach come,  
Whose noise whets valour sharp, like beer  
By thunder turn'd to vinegar. *cant. 2. ver. 107.*  
The sun had long since in the lap  
Of Thetis taken out his nap,  
And like a lobster boil'd, the morn  
From black to red began to turn.

*Part 2. cant. 2. ver. 29.*

My Galligaskins that have long withstood  
The winter's fury and incroaching frosts,  
By time subdu'd, (what will not time subdue!)  
An horrid chasm disclose, &c.  
Thus a well-fraught ship, &c.

*Splendid Skilling.*

† The Drummer.

the

the roof; to improve cobwebs into filk; to soften marble for pillows and pincushions; to propagate a breed of naked sheep; are palpably impossible or useless, or both at once\*.

\* Gulliver's Travels.

SECT.

## S E C T. VII.

*Of the sense or taste of Virtue.*

**T**HE moral sense is not only itself a taste of a superior order, by which, in characters and conduct, we distinguish between the right and the wrong, the excellent and the faulty; but it also spreads its influence over all the most considerable works of art and genius. It is never unregarded in serious performances, and it enters even into the most ludicrous. It claims a *joint authority* with the other principles of taste; it requires an attachment to morality in the epos and the drama, and it pronounces the quickest flights of wit, without it, phrensy and distraction. Something moral has insinuated itself, not only into the serious designs of Raphael, but also into the humorous representations of Hogarth.

NAY our moral sense claims authority *superior* to all the rest. It renders morality the chief requisite; and where this is in any degree violated, no other qualities can atone for the transgression. Particular beauties may be approved, but the work is, on the whole, condemned.

How

How great a part of the sentiments produced by works of genius, arises from the exertion of this sense, approving or condemning, is too obvious to require our dwelling on it. The noblest and most delightful subjects of imitation are affections, characters, and actions: and their peculiar merit arises almost entirely from their continually employing the moral faculty. By its approbation, more effectually than by any other means, we become interested for some of the persons represented, and sympathise with every change in their condition. It fills us with joyful approbation of the virtuous character, and with abhorrence, not ungrateful when thus excited, of the vicious. When prosperity and success attend the virtuous man, we feel his good desert, we rejoice to find it meet its due reward, we are composed into delightful serenity, complacence, and assiance in righteous providence: when he is sunk into disappointment and adversity, we are sensible that he deserved it not, and taste the pleasurable pain of compassion for his sufferings, and virtuous resentment against the authors of them. When the vicious man is prosperous, we glow with indignation, we feel a kind of melancholy despondence: when he suffers, we become sensible to the danger of vice, to the terrors of guilt; we ~~allow~~ his ill desert, ~~but~~ mix pity with our blame. We are thus agitated

tated by those most important passions, the infusion of which constitutes the highest entertainment that works of taste can give.

BUT what extensive influence the moral sense has on taste of every kind, it will be unnecessary particularly to describe, if we only recollect the various perceptions which it conveys. To it belongs our perception of the fairness, beauty, and loveliness of virtue; of the ugliness, deformity, and hateful-ness of vice; produced by the native qualities of each considered simply. From it is derived our perception of decency, fitness, and congruity in the former; of incongruity, indecency, and unfitness in the latter; which arises from implicit comparison of them with the structure and constitution of the mind. By it we perceive that virtue is obligatory, right, and due; and that vice is undue, unlawful, and wrong: the perception springs from the supremacy of our approving and disapproving faculty, as our internal governor prescribing a law of life. The same sense conveys a perception of merit or good desert in virtue; of demerit or ill desert in vice; a perception which never fails to be excited when we think at once of moral and natural good or evil. From this variety of sensations arise all the reflex passions which regard good or bad men as their objects. How much

these sentiments and affections enter into the perceptions of taste, the least reflection will inform us.

THUS much may suffice for an analysis of taste into those simple powers of human nature which are its principles. There are qualities in things, determinate and stable, independent of humour or caprice, that are fit to operate on mental principles common to all men, and, by operating on them, are naturally productive of the sentiments of taste in all its forms. If, in any particular instance, they prove ineffectual, it is to be ascribed to some weakness or disorder in the person who remains unmoved when these qualities are exhibited to his view. Men are, with *few* exceptions, affected by the qualities we have investigated : but these qualities themselves are, without *any* exception, the constituents of excellence or faultiness in the several kinds. What is necessary for perceiving them with perfect relish, we shall next examine.

## P A R T II.

The formation of taste by the union and improvement of its simple principles.

## S E C T. I.

*Of the union of the Internal Senses, and the assistance they receive from delicacy of passion.*

ANY one of the internal senses, existing in vigour and perfection, forms a particular species of taste, and enables a man to judge in some one subject of art or genius : but *all* of them must at once be vigorous, in order to constitute taste in its just extent. This *union* is necessary, not only for giving it a proper compass, but also for perfecting each of its exertions.

OUR sentiments and emotions receive an immense addition of strength from their reciprocal influence on one another. Concomitant emotions, related by their feeling, their direction, or their objects, or even without

any relation existing in the mind together, run into one, and by their mixture produce an intense sensation. Hence different gratifications, either of the same or diverse senses, occurring to the mind at once, give it a complicated joy. The stillness and serenity of a summer morning, the sweet fragrance of flowers, the music of birds, and a thousand other agreeable circumstances, are, even commonly, observed to bestow extraordinary force on the grandeur or beauty of rural scenes.

THOUGH each object of taste has some *leading* character, by which it is peculiarly fitted to produce one *principal* sensation, it may, at the same time, by its *subordinate* qualities, produce *attendant* feelings, which will render the principal one higher and more intense, by their conspiring with it. But if the principles of taste adapted to these, be weak or deficient, we not only lose entirely *some* of the pleasures which the object might convey, but cannot even enjoy *any* of them with perfect relish, as we are insensible to the heightenings which each receives from its connexion with the rest.

NONE of our sensations is more able to support itself without foreign aid, than that of grandeur; of which a great critic reckons it a necessary character, that it pleases still more  
the



the oftener it is examined \*. Yet every one must be sensible, how much more intense it is rendered by novelty; for the sublimest objects often strike us very weakly, or scarce at all, when, by long custom, they have become familiar. The sublimity of the heavens could not fail to enrapture one unaccustomed to the glorious spectacle. Though the sentiment of sublimity fills, and almost exceeds the capacity of the mind, we can yet receive along with it other pleasureable feelings, which will increase it by their conjunction. The most elevating objects in nature may be rendered more delightful by their beauty and utility. The most extensive power may be rendered more sublime, by its being exercised in such a manner as to produce moral approbation. Virgil gives a sublime idea of the Romans, when he represents them as destined for empire universal, as prescribing laws at pleasure, and forcing into subjection the most haughty opposers. But he artfully renders it more sublime, by insinuating, that they exercised their power in clemency to willing sub-

\* "Όταν ὅν ὑπ' ἀνδρὸς ἔμφορος ἔμπερου λόγων πολλάκις ἀκνόμενόν τι, πρὸς μεγαλοφροσύνην τὴν ψυχὴν μὴ συνδιατιθεῖ, μὴδ' ἐγκαταλείπη, τῇ διανοίᾳ πλεον τῷ λεγομένου τὸ ἀναθεωρούμενον, πίπῃ δ', ἂν τὸ συνεχὲς ἐπισκοπῇς, εἰς ἀπαύξησην οὐκ ἂν ἐτ' ἐληθέης ὕψος ἢ. ΛΟΓΓ. περὶ ὕψ. τμη. ζ'.

jects \*. This procures our moral approbation, and augments the sentiment of grandeur which it accompanies. In architecture, the separate pleasures arising from the beauty, proportion, fitness, and ornaments of the parts, heighten the sublime. In painting, the sublime is generally attended by the graceful.

POETRY is a complication of beauties, reflecting by their union additional lustre on one another. The sublime, the new, the elegant, the natural, the virtuous, are often blended in the imitation; brightened by the power of fiction, and the richest variety of imagery; and rendered more delightful by the harmony of numbers. When poetry is set to well-adapted music, both gain *new* power by their alliance. The music, by exciting the requisite affections, puts the mind in a disposition to conceive ideas suited to them, with peculiar facility, vivacity, and pleasure. These ideas the poet raises: and they, in their turn, enliven the affections, and preserve them from languishing or expiring, by rendering their objects more deter-

\* Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento.  
Hæ tibi erunt artes; pacisque imponere morem,  
*Parcere subjeclis, et debellare superbos.*

*Æn.* vi. 847.

minate. But in order to experience this compound pleasure, both a musical ear and a poetic taste are requisite : the want of either extinguishes one part of the delight, and very much diminishes the other.

THE degree of force with which objects strike us, depends much on the *prevailing* disposition of the mind. Things often affect us deeply, when we are in an humour suited to them, though at another time they would make small impression. The *smallest* injury may produce fury in a person naturally passionate, or by accident chagrined. When the temper of the mind is such as gives it an habitual turn to one kind of sentiments and affections, it enters into them, whenever they occur, with extraordinary spirit. As they fall in with its predominant bent, no force is required to adapt it to the perception of them; it spontaneously, and even eagerly embraces them, as perfectly conformable to its frame.

Now, as all the objects of the same internal sense, however various, have their common qualities ; so all these senses are analogous in their principles and feeling. The same turn of mind is on this account congruous to them all. The prevalence and exercise of any one of them disposes and attunes the mind to all the rest. And this previous disposition to them bestows.

bestows strength and vigour on all their exertions. In fact, the kindred powers of taste are seldom disunited. Where all of them have considerable vigour, one may be, in comparison with the rest, predominant, either by the natural construction of the mind, or by peculiar culture: but where one of them is remarkably dull, or altogether wanting, the others scarce ever appear in full perfection.

THE union of these powers has a further influence in forming taste, as that union opens a new field, in which taste may exercise itself, and in which many flowers may be gathered for adorning the native beauty of its objects. As the fine arts are truly sisters, derived from the same common parent *nature*, they bear to one another, and to their original, various similitudes, relations, and analogies \*. One who possesses all the internal senses vigorous, and has employed them all about their various objects, is able to trace out these. They have charmed every genuine critic; and every reader of taste is delighted with the metaphors and comparisons which are founded on the perception of them. In observing them we find a noble and exquisite entertainment.

\* Est etiam illa Platonis vera---vox, Omnem doctrinam harum ingenuarum et humanarum artium, uno quodam societatis vinculo contineri ---- Mirus quidam omnium quasi consensus doctrinarum, concentusque reperitur. *Cic. de Orat. l. 3.*

They continually occur to an extensive taste; and, mingling with the more immediate and confined gratification of each power of imagination, increase its delightfulness. As one *science*, by supplying illustrations, makes another better *understood*; so one *art*, by throwing lustre on another, makes it more exquisitely *relished*. This enlargement of taste places one, as it were, upon an eminence; and not only enables him to take in a wider prospect, but also improves all the parts of it, by comparing or contrasting them.

In all these ways our interior senses, merely by their union, tend to form and perfect taste.

WE may here take occasion to mention a principle, distinct from all the internal senses, from which taste will, in many instances, receive assistance. It is such a *sensibility of heart*, as fits a man for being easily moved, and for readily catching, as by infection, any passion that a work is fitted to excite. The souls of men are far from being alike susceptible of impressions of this kind. A hard-hearted man can be a spectator of very great distress, without feeling any emotion: A man of a cruel temper has a malignant joy in producing misery. On the other hand, many are composed of so delicate materials, that the smallest

est uneasiness of their fellow-creatures excites their pity. A similar variety may be observed, in respect of the other passions. Persons of the former cast will be little affected by the most moving tragedy; those of the latter turn will be interested by a very indifferent one. A performance which can infuse the keenest passions into the breast of an Italian, will affect a Frenchman very little, and leave an Englishman perfectly unconcerned. We are apt to be astonished, when we read of the prodigious force with which eloquence wrought upon the delicate spirits of the Athenians; and feel so little of any thing analogous to it, that nothing but the most unexceptionable evidence could make it credible. This diversity in the formation of the heart will produce a considerable diversity, in the sentiments which men receive from works of taste, and in the judgment which they form concerning them.

A VERY great part of the merit of most works of genius arises from their fitness to agitate the heart with a variety of passions. In the most excellent music, the agreeableness of the melody, and the richness of the harmony, are only subservient to the expression. It is so much the business of painting and poetry to affect us, by infusing suitable passions,

fions, that a very ingenious critic \* has mistaken it for the *only* business of these arts. Some kinds of poetry are addressed principally to the powers of imagination, and attain their ultimate end, by exhibiting pictures of such objects as gratify our internal senses. Such particularly is descriptive poetry. But even this kind will soon grow languid and unenterprising, if it does not support itself, by introducing subjects of an affecting nature. In dramatic poetry, and in eloquence, the ultimate end is to affect: whatever only pleases the internal senses is subordinate to this end, and becomes faulty if it be not conducive to it.

SINCE, therefore, the pathetic is a quality of so great moment in works of taste, a man who is destitute of sensibility of heart must be a very imperfect judge of them. [He is a stranger to those feelings which are of greatest importance to direct his judgment.] If a person possessed all the internal senses in perfection, without delicacy of passion, he could estimate the principal works of genius, only by their inferior qualities. In a tragedy, he might perceive whether descriptions of natural objects are beautiful or sublime, whe-

\* The Abbé du Bos. See *Reflex. Critiq. sur la poésie & sur la peinture*, passim.

ther the characters are natural and well supported, whether the sentiments are just and noble; he might examine, with coldness and indifference, the beauties and the faults of the composition: but whether it has accomplished its main end, whether the fable is fit to produce pity and terror in the spectators, he must be totally at a loss to determine. In a word, he can have no relish for any thing that is addressed to the *heart*.

DELICACY of passion must be united with vigorous internal senses, in order to give taste its just extent. Where this union takes place, works of genius produce their full effect; and inspire a complicated pleasure. A man receives adequate perceptions of all their qualities, and by this means has it in his power to allow each its proper weight in determining his judgment concerning the merit of the whole. Delicacy of passion may interest a person so much, that he cannot for some time examine a performance with critical exactness; but it gives him exquisite delight in the mean time, and enables him to pass a just sentence at last.



## S E C T. II.

*Of the influence of Judgment upon Taste.*

THE completest union of the internal senses, is not of itself sufficient to form good taste, even though they be attended with the greatest delicacy of passion. They must be aided with *judgment*, the faculty which distinguishes things different, separates truth from falsehood, and compares together objects and their qualities. Judgment must indeed accompany even their most *imperfect* exertions. They do not operate, till certain qualities in objects have been perceived, discriminated from others similar, compared, and compounded. In all this, judgment is employed : it bears a part in the discernment and production of every form that strikes them. But in assisting their *perfect* energies, it has a still more extensive influence. *Good sense* is an indispensable ingredient in true taste, which always implies a quick and accurate perception of things as they really are.

THAT judgment may completely exhibit to the internal senses, the beauties and excellencies of *nature*, it measures the amplitude of things, determines their proportions, and

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traces

traces out their wise construction and beneficial tendency. It uses all the methods which art and science indicate, for discovering those qualities that lie too deep spontaneously to strike the eye. It investigates the laws and causes of the works of *nature*: it compares and contrasts them with the more imperfect works of *art*; and thus supplies materials from which fancy may produce ideas, and form combinations, that will strongly affect the mental taste.

JUDGMENT finds out the general characters of *each art*, and, by comparing them, draws conclusions concerning the relations which subsist between *different arts*. Till it has discovered these, none of them can acquire that additional power of pleasing which is imparted to them by their mutual connexion.

IN every art, a just performance consists of various parts, combined into one system, and subservient to one design. But, without the exercise of judgment, we cannot know whether the design is skilfully prosecuted, whether the means are well adjusted to the end, whether every member which is introduced, has a tendency to promote it.

IN *music*, the ear immediately perceives the pleasure resulting from each principle : but *judgment*, assuming the perceptions of that organ, compares them, and by comparison determines their respective merit and due proportion. It enables the ear, from its discovery of the general relations, to distinguish with precision between invention and extravagance, to discern the suitability or unsuitableness of the parts, and their fitness or unfitness to sustain the main subject.

IN *painting*, judgment discovers the meaning of the piece; not only remotely, as it is the instrument of that previous knowledge which is necessary for understanding it; but also more immediately, as, from the structure and relation of the parts, it infers the general design, and explains their subserviency to the main end of the whole. It compares the imitation with its exemplar, and sees its likeness. It is judgment, working on our experience, that puts it in our power to know, whether the painter has fixed upon the attitudes and airs in nature appropriated to the passions, characters, and actions which he would represent; and, when these attitudes are various, whether he has chosen those which most perfectly correspond with the unity and propriety of his design. Painting being circumscribed to an instant of time, judgment alone

can perceive, whether that instant is properly selected, whether the artist has pitched on that moment which comprehends the circumstances most essential to the grand event, and best allows, without a deviation from simplicity, the indication of the other requisite circumstances. It estimates the due proportion of all the figures, in dignity, elegance, and lustre, and their due subordination to the principal. [In fine, it is necessarily employed in that exhibition of the object to the senses which must be previous to their perception of it.]

IN order to approve or condemn in *poetry* or *eloquence*, we must take into view at once, and compare, so many particulars, that none can hesitate to acknowledge the absolute necessity of a sound and vigorous judgment. We must determine, whether the fable or design is well imagined in congruity to the species of the poem or discourse; whether all the incidents, or arguments are natural members of it; which of them promotes its force or beauty, or which, by its want of connexion, obstructs the end, or debilitates its genuine effect; what degree of relation is sufficient to introduce episodes, illustrations, or digressions, so that they may appear, not excrescences and deformities, but suitable decorations. It is *sense* which is pleased or displeased when these

these things are determined : but *judgment* alone can determine them, and present to sense the object of its perception. By an accurate scrutiny of the various relations of the parts, judgment fixes that situation in which they will appear with greatest advantage, and most promote that regular organization on which both the elegance and vigour of the whole depends. It compares characters with nature; and pronounces them either real or monstrous. It compares them with other characters; and finds them good or bad in the kind, properly or improperly marked. It compares them with themselves; and discovers whether they are consistent or inconsistent, well or ill supported; whether their peculiar decorum is preserved or violated. Truth and justness is the foundation of every beauty in sentiment; it imparts to it that solidity, without which it may dazzle a vulgar eye, but can never please one who looks beyond the first appearance : and to ascertain truth, to unmask falsehood, however artfully disguised, is the peculiar prerogative of judgment. The finest sentiments, if applied to subjects unsuitable, may not only lose their beauty, but even throw deformity upon the whole : and judgment alone perceives the fitness or unfitness of their application. This faculty arrogates also to itself, in some degree, the cognisance of style and language; and, by bringing it to

the test of custom, discovers its propriety, purity, and elegance. Judgment, not satisfied with examining the separate parts, combines them, and the feelings which they produce, in order to estimate the merit of the whole. It settles the relative value of different poems and discourses, of the same or various kinds, by a studious and severe comparison of the dignity of their ends, the difficulty of attaining them, the moment of their effects, the suitableness and ingenuity of the means employed.

THUS in all the operations of taste, judgment is employed ; not only in presenting the subjects on which the senses exercise themselves ; but also in comparing and weighing the perceptions and decrees of the senses themselves, and thence passing ultimate sentence upon the whole.

BUT though the reflex senses and judgment must be united, yet, in a consistence with true taste, they may be united in very different proportions. In some, the acuteness of the *senses* ; in others, the accuracy of the *judgment*, is the predominant quality. Both will determine justly : but they are guided by different lights ; the former, by the perception of sense ; the latter, by the conviction of the understanding. One *feels* what pleases

fes or displeases ; the other *knows* what ought  
 to gratify or disgust. Sense has a kind of in-  
 stinctive infallibility, by means of which,  
 when it is vigorous, it can preserve from er-  
 ror, though judgment should not be perfect.  
 Judgment, by contemplating the qualities  
 that affect taste, by surveying its sentiments  
 in their causes, often makes amends for dul-  
 ness of imagination. Where *that* prevails,  
 one's chief entertainment from works of ge-  
 nius lies in what he feels : where *this* is predo-  
 minant, one enjoys principally the intellectual  
 pleasure which results from discovering the  
 causes of his feelings. This diversity in the  
 form and constitution of taste is very obser-  
 vable in two of the greatest critics of antiquity.  
 Longinus is justly characterised

*An ardent judge, who, zealous in his trust,  
 With warmth gives sentence.——*

In him the internal senses were exquisitely  
 delicate ; but his judgment, though good,  
 was not in proportion. On this account he  
 delivers just sentiments with rapture and  
 enthusiasm, and, by a kind of contagion,  
 infuses them into his readers, without always  
 explaining to them the reason of their being so  
 affected. Aristotle, on the contrary, appears  
 to examine his subject, perfectly cool and un-  
 affected ; he discovers no warmth of imagi-  
 nation,

nation, no such admiration or ecstacy, as can, without reflection, transport his readers into his opinion. He derives his decisions, not from the liveliness of feeling, but from the depth of penetration; and seldom pronounces them, without convincing us that they are just. Some degree of the same diversity may be remarked in Bouhours and Bossu among the moderns.

S E C T.



## S E C T. III.

*Taste improveable ; by what means ; and in what respects.*

**B**OTH reflex sense, and judgment, its associate, are originally implanted in very different degrees in different men. In some they are so *weak* and languid, that, in many instances, they scarce at all shew themselves, and are incapable of a very high degree of improvement by any education, care, or exercise. In others they are naturally *vigorous*, so that they spontaneously exert themselves on most occasions, determine with considerably accuracy, and perceive with wonderful acuteness. In the *former* the seeds of taste must, without the greatest culture, lie for ever latent and inactive : and to the *latter*, culture is far from being unnecessary ; by means of it, the principles of taste may be improved very much beyond their original perfection \*.

\* Il est certain que la nature ne fait pas toute seule un bel esprit. La plus heureuse naissance a besoin d'une bonne education, et de cet usage du monde, qui raffine l'intelligence, et qui subtilise le bon sens. 4. *Entret. d'Ariste et d'Eugene.*

This remark is as applicable to taste as to any other ingredient in the idea expressed by the term *bel esprit*.

WE

WE are scarce possessed of any faculty of mind or body that is not improveable. Even our *external senses* may be rendered more acute than they were at first. Persons accustomed to observe distant objects can descry them more readily than others. Touch often becomes much more exquisite in those whose employment leads them to examine the polish of bodies, than it is in those who have no occasion for such examination. Use very much improves our quickness in distinguishing different flavours, and their compositions. But the *internal senses* may receive vastly greater alterations. The former are *ultimate* principles in human nature; and, like the elemental parts, or the fundamental laws of the material world, are in a great measure exempted from our power: the latter are *derived* and *compounded* faculties, liable to alteration from every change in that series, or combination of causes, by which they are produced. The former are more directly subservient to our preservation than our pleasure; and therefore, like the vital motions, are almost entirely subjected to the wiser government of the author of our natures: the latter, though highly conducive to our well-being and entertainment, are not necessary to our being; and may, for this reason, without great hazard, be in a considerable degree intrusted to our own care, and  
made

made dependent for their perfection on the consequences of our own endeavours to regulate and improve them.

TASTE very early begins to show itself: but it is at first *rude*, inaccurate, and confined. It is *gradually* formed, and by slow steps advances towards *excellence*. Every exertion of it, if properly applied, wears off some defect, corrects some inaccuracy, strengthens some of its principles, or gives it a relish for some new object. Like all our other powers, it is subject to the law of *habit*, which is the grand, indeed the only *immediate* means of improvement of every kind, extending its power to all our faculties, both of action and of perception. Every expedient for cultivating either, is but a particular species of use and exercise, which derives its efficacy solely from the force of custom. To the forming of taste, peculiar means are in their nature suited. The same qualities of the mind which, by their operation, produce the reflex senses, will, by co-operating with habit, improve and exalt them. Whatever therefore usually excites these qualities, and draws them out into act, must be a mean of cultivating taste. It grows by such congruous exercise, and always holds proportion to the natural vigour of its principles, the propriety and efficacy of the culture bestowed

flowed upon it, and the skill and diligence with which it is applied.

'TIS easy to trace the progress of taste in ourselves or others. Children discover the rudiments of it. They are passionately fond of every novelty; pleased with order and regularity in such simple instances as they can comprehend; delighted with a glow of colours; admirers of every form which they think august: they perceive, often to a surprising degree, the harmony of sounds; are charmed with an appearance of ingenuity in their diversions; prone to imitate, and gratified by every effect of imitation which they are capable of observing: they are very quick in discerning oddity, and highly entertained with the discovery of it: and they will hardly ever fail of passing a right judgment concerning characters, when these characters are exerted in a series of actions level to their understandings. But a small degree of excellence satisfies them, a false semblance of it is easily imposed on them for the true; any disguise misleads them. The daubing of a sign-post, the improbable tales of nurses, the unnatural adventures of chivalry, the harsh numbers of Grubstreet rhyme, the grating notes of a strolling fidler, the coarsest buffoonery, are sufficient to delight them. In some, for want of exercise and culture, the  
same

same grossness, or contraction of taste continues always; or taste is applied in a low, perverse, or whimsical manner. They may despise a relish for *childish* trifles; but themselves enter into *important* subjects with as little relish as the merest children; or are perhaps delighted with *other trifles*, a very little different or superior in kind. Of dress or equipage, of the beauties of a tulip, of a shell, or a butterfly, they are accurate judges and high admirers: but the sublimity of nature, the ingenuity of art, the grace of painting, the charms of genuine poetry, the simplicity of pastoral, the boldness of the ode, the affecting incidents of tragedy, the just representation of comedy; these are subjects of which they understand nothing, of which they can form no judgment. Many who pretend to judge, having pursued a wrong track of study, or fixed an erroneous standard of merit, betray an uninformed, fantastical, or perverted relish. It is only in the few who improve the rudiments of taste which nature has implanted, by culture well chosen, and judiciously applied, that taste at length appears in elegant form, and just proportions.

THUS taste, like every other human excellence, is of a progressive nature; rising by various stages, from its seeds and elements

to maturity ; but, like delicate plants, liable to be checked in its growth and killed, or else to become crooked and distorted, by negligence, or improper management \*. *Goodness* of taste lies in its maturity and perfection. It consists in certain *excellences* of our original powers of judgment and imagination combined. These may be reduced to four ; *sensibility, refinement, correctness*, and the *proportion* or *comparative adjustment of its separate principles*. All these must be in some considerable degree *united*, in order to form *true taste*. The person in whom they meet, acquires authority and influence, and forms just decisions ; which may be rejected by the caprice of *some*, but are sure to gain *general* acknowledgment. This excellence of taste supposes, not only *culture*, but culture *judiciously applied*. Want of taste unavoidably springs from *negligence* ; false taste, from *injudicious* cultivation.

\* Le sentiment dont je parle est dans tous les hommes, mais comme ils n'ont pas tous les oreilles et les yeux également bons, de même ils n'ont pas tous le sentiment également parfait. Les uns l'ont meilleurs que les autres, ou bien parce que leurs organes sont naturellement mieux composés, ou bien parce qu'ils l'ont perfectionné par l'usage fréquent qu'ils en ont fait, et par l'expérience. *Reflex. Crit. sur la poésie et sur la peinture, part 2. § 23.*

## S E C T. IV.

*Of Sensibility of Taste.*

**I**N order to form a fine taste, the mental powers which compose it, must possess exquisite *sensibility* and delicacy; must be

——— *Feelingly alive*  
*To each fine impulse.*———

THERE is naturally a vast difference among mankind, in the acuteness of all their perceptive powers. They are in some, of so *tender* and delicate a structure, that they are *strongly affected* both with pleasure and pain. In others, their *dullness* renders both enjoyments and sufferings *languid*. This diversity is in none of our powers more conspicuous than in *taste*. In some, *taste* is so extremely *sensible*, that they cannot survey any excellence of art or nature, but with high relish and enthusiastic rapture; nor observe any deformity or blemish, without the keenest disgust. Others, devoted to the exercise of reason, the gratification of appetite, or the pursuits of gain, are perfect strangers to the satisfactions, or uneasinesses of taste; they can scarce form any idea of them. Addison men-

tions a celebrated mathematician, who was so perfectly incapable of any impression from the charms of poetry, that he read the *Æneid*, with no other satisfaction than what he derived from a comparison of it with a map of the travels of *Æneas*.

SENSIBILITY very much depends on the *original* construction of the mind ; it being, less than any other of the qualities of good taste, *improveable* by use. The effect of *habit* on our *perceptions* is the very reverse of that which it produces on our *active powers*. It *strengthens* the latter, but gradually *diminishes* the vivacity of the former. Custom wears off the difficulty of conception, which renders new objects peculiarly agreeable or disagreeable. They come by repetition to enter the mind with so great facility, that they give no exercise to its faculties ; and, by consequence, convey much less intense delight or uneasiness than at first. Hence it would seem to follow, that the more we are conversant with objects of taste, the less forcible our sentiments should be. And indeed the most *unexperienced* feel the most *turbulent* and *violent* pleasure or pain. Use renders both more *reserved* and moderate :

For fools admire, but men of sense approve.

But



But still we find in fact, that an extensive acquaintance with the beauties of art and nature heightens our relish for them. When we are accustomed to the study, we can survey no object with indifference; but receive higher pleasure, or more pungent disgust, than they whose taste is wholly unimproved.

THE following observations will account for this seeming paradox.

WERE the *same* object, however excellent, to be continually presented to our taste, it must soon lose its charms; first becoming indifferent, and then disgusting, by the languor which a continual identity of exercise would introduce. Hence no natural scene, no production of art or genius, can please us long, except every new survey discovers beauties unobserved before, or gives us additional assurance of its perfection. But the objects of taste are infinitely various. One who indulges it is continually changing his subjects, and feeling pleasures, or pains really distinct, though in the highest degree analogous. He thus preserves a sort of *novelty*, which tends to keep up the original vivacity of his perceptions: and the continual employment of taste produces some *effects* which compensate, nay often overbalance, the gradual decay of sensibility by repetition.

IT is by enabling us to conceive objects with *facility*, that custom diminishes the strength of their impressions. But *facility*, if moderate, is a source of pleasure: it will therefore, by its *immediate* influence, for some time prevent our delight from being weakened. Custom also renders our conceptions, though less *striking*, yet more *complete* and accurate. A more perfect object is presented to the mind, than could be, previous to use: and its greater *perfection* may increase our approbation or dislike, as much as *novelty* did before. A performance often fails to please or disgust, merely because, having an inadequate idea of its parts, we do not observe the qualities from which these sentiments should result. A person unskilled in poetry or painting will survey a work with perfect indifference, because he does not really see its beauties, or its blemishes. But let these be pointed out to him by one more knowing in the art, immediately he begins to approve, or disapprove. Custom supplies the place of an external monitor, by enabling us to take in at one view a full perception of every quality on which the excellence or faultiness depends.

It may be observed farther, that taste, being a faculty of a derivative kind, implies in its exertion mental *actions*, which are  
strengthened

strengthened by use and exercise. And *their* improvement tends to support the delicacy and liveliness of *its* perceptions. Custom strengthens those principles and processes of thought by which our reflex sensations are produced; and the sensations must always bear some proportion to the vigour of their causes. The mind acquires a habit of enlarging itself to receive the sentiment of sublimity, by being accustomed to expand its faculties to the dimensions of a large object: by use, it becomes skilful in compounding uniformity with variety; in measuring proportion; in tracing out design; in judging of imitation; in blending heterogeneous qualities. This expertness gives force and boldness to the sentiments produced, and heightens the attendant consciousness of our own abilities.

OBJECTS impress us more or less, according to the degree of *attention* which we bestow upon them. Custom enables us to apply our minds more vigorously to objects than we could do at first. Not only is it difficult, to *form* a complete conception of new objects; but, when they excite neither surprise nor curiosity, it is sometimes even difficult to *attempt* conceiving them, and to bring ourselves steadily to contemplate them. Custom wears off this indisposition; begets an aptitude and  
previous

previous bias to the emotions which beauty and deformity inspire; and thus renders us prone to their peculiar sentiments. Works of taste fall in with the predominant temper, and on that account easily engage the attention, affect us deeply, and excite the liveliest perceptions. It is remarkable too, from whatever cause it proceeds, that we set a high value on what we have been long accustomed to. A man of taste places the pleasures of imagination in a higher class than other men are apt to do; he esteems them more noble and substantial: and the opinion acquired by custom, of their value and importance transfuses itself into each gratification.

THE sentiments of taste depend very much on *association*. So far as they proceed from this, *custom* must augment them; as custom, by adding a new principle of union, renders the connexion more intimate, and introduces the related ideas more quickly and forcibly. Custom likewise begets new associations, and enables works of taste to suggest ideas which were not *originally* connected with them: and what a surprising intenseness the association of ideas, originally foreign, bestows on our perceptions, both pleasurable and painful, is obvious in too many instances to require being enlarged on.

By

By the concurrence of these causes, the sensibility of taste is even *augmented*, notwithstanding the tendency of habit to *diminish* it. Its gratification, or disgust is often more exquisite, than any of the emotions which attend appetite and passion. It becomes so acute, that the *smallest* beauties and blemishes have force sufficient to affect it. But though the vivacity of its perceptions should sometimes decay by repetition; yet custom, producing the other perfections of taste, gives a refinement, elegance, and assurance to our sentiments, which may compensate their *violence* at first. *Judgment* may approve with the greatest confidence and justice, when *fancy* is no longer enraptured and enthusiastically moved.

SENSIBILITY of taste arises chiefly from the structure of our internal senses, and is but indirectly and remotely connected with the soundness or improvement of judgment. Insensibility is *one* ingredient in many sorts of false taste; but does not alone constitute so much one species of *wrong* taste, as a total *deficiency* or great *weakness* of taste. Sensibility may sometimes become *excessive*; and render us extravagant both in liking and disliking, in commending and blaming. But, in truth, this extravagance proceeds much less commonly from excess of sensibility, than from a defect  
in

in the other requisites of fine taste ; from an incapacity to distinguish and ascertain, with precision, different degrees of excellence, or faultiness. Instead of forming an adequate idea of the nature of the beauty or deformity, we go beyond all bounds of moderation ; and when we want to express our sentiments, can do it only in general terms, tumid and exaggerated. If we are displeased, we signify it, with the inveteracy of a Dennis, in terms of general invective ; and, without explaining the causes of our disapprobation, pronounce it poor, dull, wretched, execrable. If we are pleased, we cannot tell with what, how, or why ; but only declare it fine, incomparable, with the unmeaning rapture of an ancient rhapsodist, who, without understanding the principles of art, or the sense of an author, like a madman, really agitated by the fury which the poets feigned, could recite or praise them with such vehemence, as transported himself, and astonished his auditors \*.

\* From Plato's dialogue inscribed *Io*, we learn, that there were men of this character, who travelled through Greece, and contended at the public festivals. Their chief employment was, to repeat beautiful passages from the poets, particularly Homer, with a rapturous and enthusiastic pronunciation, as if they had an exquisite and warm perception of their excellence. It is probable that they also declaimed in praise of their favourite verses : this seems to be implied in the expressions, *περὶ ποιητῶ διαλέγειν*, *περὶ Ὁμήρου λέγειν* & *εὐπορεῖν*, and is insinuated by the proof which Socrates

crates produces of their ignorance of art, from the capacity of every real artist to distinguish beauties from faults, and to point them out in the works of any performer in the kind. Socrates proves, from the concessions of his antagonist, that neither did his sentiments proceed from true taste, from a vigorous perception of the beauties he recited, nor his encomiums from judgment, from a critical skill in the principles of beauty. He therefore, in his usual strain of irony, resolves both into an unaccountable agitation of spirit, proceeding either from madness or from inspiration; and with great humour compares the several muses to as many magnets. The muse inspires the poet, without any agency or knowledge of his; he, in the same manner, conveys the inspiration to his rhapsodist; and he to his attentive hearers: just as the loadstone, by its imperceptible and unaccountable influence, attracts a ring of iron, that a second, and that a third.

S E C T.

## S E C T. V.

*Of Refinement of Taste.*

**R**EFINEMENT, or *elegance*, which, as well as sensibility, is included in the idea of *delicacy*, is another quality requisite for forming a perfect taste.

TASTE is so deeply rooted in human nature, that none are pleased but with some degree of *real* excellence and beauty. But a very *low* degree will *satisfy* one who is acquainted with nothing higher. As we can form no simple *idea*, till its correspondent *sensation* has been first perceived ; so, with respect to many of our ideas, we are confined to that precise *degree* of which we have had experience, and cannot by any means enlarge them. Our thoughts can scarce be raised to a distinct conception of higher pleasure or pain, than we have actually felt. On this account *real* excellence, however *low*, will not only *gratify*, but *fill* the unimproved sense \*.

But

\* Je ne comprends pas le bas peuple dans le public capable de prononcer sur les poëmes ou sur les tableaux, comme de décider à quel degré ils sont excellents. Le mot de public ne renferme ici que les personnes qui ont acquis



But knowledge of greater perfection in the kind produces *nicety*; makes our pleasure, when obtained, more elegant; but renders it more difficult to be obtained. Theſpis in his *cart*, no doubt, charmed his contemporaries, though his rude and imperfect representations would have afforded little entertainment to their politer ſucceſſors, accuſtomed to the completer drama of Sophocles and Euripides. The coarſe jeſts of Plautus, not only pleaſed the general taſte, but gained the approbation of Cicero; and never loſt their credit, till the politeneſs of a *court* produced a refinement in wit and humour \*. A very ſorry ballad, or the wildeſt flights of ungoverned fancy, are admired by the vulgar: but nothing inferior to the regular invention and maſterly execution of Homer can fully ſatisfy a perfect taſte. An indifferent tune on a bad inſtrument con-

acquis des lumieres, ſoit par la lecture, ſoit par la commerce du monde. Elles ſont les ſeules qui puiſſent marquer le rang des poëmes et des tableaux, quoiqu'il ſe rencontre dans les ouvrages excellents des beautes capable de ſe faire ſentir au peuple du plus bas étage et de l'obliger a ſe récrier. Mais comme il eſt ſans connoiſſance des autres ouvrages, il n'eſt pas en état de diſcerner à quel point le poëme qui le fait pleurer, eſt excellent, ni quel rang il doit tenir parmi les autres poëmes. *Reſex. Crit. ſur la poeſie et ſur la peinture, part 2. § 22.*

- \* At veſtſi proavi Plautinos et numeros et  
Laudavere *ſales*; nimum patienter utrumque  
(Ne dicam ſtulte) mirati: ſi modo ego et vos  
Scimus inurbanum lepido ſeponere dictum.

*Hor. Ars Poet. ver. 273.*

tents the many : but the imperfection, or grossness of its harmony is intolerable to a fine ear.

HABIT, as was observed, tends to diminish the sensibility of taste. From this diminution, refinement in some degree proceeds. In proportion as our gratifications lose their intensity by repetition, we become indifferent to the *imperfect* degrees of beauty which fully satisfied us before. We are no longer touched with ordinary charms ; but acquire a kind of avidity, which demands the utmost beauty and perfection. Where-ever this is wanting, we feel a deficiency, we are unsatisfied and disappointed.

BUT refinement and elegance of taste is chiefly owing to the acquisition of *knowledge*, and the *improvement* of judgment.

USE must greatly promote it, though, without any cultivation of our faculties, it should only store our memory with ideas of a variety of productions. For we should thus be able to *compare* our present object with others of the kind. And though men are well enough satisfied with *indifferent* performances in every art, while they are ignorant of *better* ; yet no sooner do they become acquainted with what has superior merit, than they readily,

readily, of their own accord, give it the preference. And, as comparifon has a great influence on the mind, many things which might be tolerable, if viewed by themfelves, will difguft, when fet in competition with others. To one who has been little converfant in works of art or genius, that may wear the charm of novelty, and appear to have the merit of invention, which another difcerns to be trite and common, or a mere fervile copy. What has in itfelf fome degree of fublimity or beauty, often appears mean or deformed by comparifon with forms more auguft or graceful. The unexperienced will admire, as the effect of prodigious fkill, what one who is acquainted with more artful contrivance, or more ingenious imitation, cenfures as arrant bungling. To a tafte refined, and by praétice qualified for making comparifons, an *inferior* fort or degree of beauty appears a real and pofitive *blemifh* \*.

## HABITUAL

\* An ingenious French critic well remarks the importance of being enabled to form comparifons, by having had opportunity of ftudying many excellent performances, “ On ne parle pas de l’exprefion auffi bien qui Pline et les  
 “ autres ecrivains de l’antiquité en ont parlé, quand on ne  
 “ s’y connoît pas. D’ailleurs il falloit que des ftatues, où  
 “ il fe trouve une exprefion auffi favante et auffi correcte  
 “ que celle du Laocoon, du Rotateur, de la Paix des Grecs,  
 “ rendiffent les anciens connoiffeurs et même difficiles fur  
 “ l’exprefion. Les anciens qui, outre les ftatues que j’ai  
 K 2 “ citées,

HABITUAL acquaintance with the objects of taste, not only thus supplies a stock of knowledge, but also wonderfully *improves* the judgment. There is none of our faculties on which custom has a greater influence. Though at first it could only discover and distinguish the most *obvious* qualities of things, it may, by exercise, acquire acuteness sufficient to penetrate into such as are most *latent*, and to perceive such as are most *delicate*. At first it can take in only the simplest combinations of qualities or short trains of ideas; but, by being often employed, it acquires enlargement; and is enabled to comprehend, to retain distinctly, and to compare with ease, the most complicated habitudes, and the largest and most intricate compositions of ideas. In consequence of culture, it discovers, in objects, qualities fit to operate on taste, which lie too deep for the observation of a novice; it can investigate the nicest and most complex perfections, and lay open the most trivial faults \*. Hence what was

“ citées, avoient encore une infinité d’autres pieces de  
 “ comparaison excellentes, ne pouvoient pas se tromper  
 “ en jugeant de l’expression dans les tableaux, ni prendre  
 “ le mediocre en ce genre pour l’exquis.” *Reflex. Crit.*  
*sur la poésie, et sur la peinture, part i. § 38.* The same  
 author repeats and illustrates this observation in many other passages.

\* *Quam multa vident pictores in umbris et in eminentia,*

was at first censured as a fault, often, on our taste becoming refined, appears to be a beauty. When reason is weak, it loses itself in a long and intricate demonstration ; it cannot retain the connexion of the whole ; it sees nothing but confusion, and obtains neither conviction nor delight. In like manner, in matters of taste, judgment, when rude and unimproved, is bewildered amidst the complexness of its object, or lost in its obscurity ; and by being baffled excites disgust. But, as soon as custom has enabled it to surmount this difficulty, and enlarge its views, it excites high approbation of those beauties which were formerly disrelished. As the most complicated reasonings become most entertaining, the most *subtile* excellencies produce the most refined approbation. Being remote, and veiled, as it were, they give exercise to our faculties ; and, by drawing out the vigour of the mind, *continue* to please, when the *grosser* and more palpable qualities have entirely palled upon the sense. They are like those delicate flavours, which, though not so agreeable at first, please much longer than such as are too luscious, or too much stimulate the

tia, quæ nos non videmus ? quam multa, quæ nos fugiunt in cantu, exaudiunt in eo genere exercitati ? *Cic. Acad. Quæst. lib. 2.*

organ \*. The profusion of ornament bestowed on the *parts*, in Gothic structures; may please one who has not acquired enlargement of mind sufficient for conceiving at one view their relation to the *whole*; but no sooner is this acquired, than he perceives superior elegance in the more *simple* symmetry and proportion of Grecian architecture.

\* The truth of this observation Cicero, without assigning the cause, illustrates, in a variety of instances, with regard both to taste and the external senses: “Difficile enim dictu est, quam causa sit, cur ea, quæ maxime sensus nostros impellunt voluptate, et specie prima acerrime commovent, ab iis celerrime fastidio quodam, et satietate abalienemur. Quanto colorum pulchritudine et varietate floridiora sunt in picturis novis pleraque, quam in veteribus? quæ tamen etiam, si primo aspectu nos ceperunt, diutius non delectant: cum iidem nos in antiquis tabulis illo ipso horrido obsoletoque teneamur. Quanto molliores sunt, et delicatiores in cantu flexiones, et falsæ vocalæ, quam certæ et severæ? quibus tamen non modo austeri, sed, si sapius sunt, multitudo ipsa reclamant. Licet hoc videre in reliquis sensibus, unguentis minus diu nos delectari, summa et acerrima suavitate conditis, quam his moderatis: et magis laudari quod terram, quam quod crocum olere videatur. In ipso tactu esse modum et mollitudinis et lævitatæ. Quintum etiam gustatus, qui est sensus ex omnibus maxime voluptarius, quippe dulcedine præter ceteros sensus commovetur, quam cito id, quod valde dulce est, aspernatur ac respuit? quis potione uti, aut cibo dulci diutius potest? cum utroque in genere ea, quæ leviter sensum voluptate moveant, facillime fugiant satietatem. Sic omnibus in rebus, voluptatibus maximis fastidium finissimum est.” *Cic. de Orat. lib. 3.*

Italian

Italian music gives small delight at first; but when once the ear is opened to take in the complexity of its harmony, and the delicate relations of discords, introduced with skilful preparations and resolutions, it then gives exquisite delight. The same may be observed of the refinements of poetry and eloquence, of wit and humour. The copious and varied declamation of Cicero will make a quicker impression than the simple nervous eloquence of Demosthenes; but this gives the highest and most durable satisfaction to a fine taste. The polite and knowing are chiefly touched with those delicacies which would escape the notice of a vulgar eye.

It is possible to acquire so great refinement, especially when taste is accompanied with genius, that we conceive in *idea* a standard of higher excellence than was ever in *fact* produced; and, measuring the effects of art by this absolute and exalted form, we always miss some part of that immensity which we have figured out to ourselves \*. Lionardo  
da

\* M. Antonius — disertos ait se vidisse multos, eloquentem omnino neminem. Insidebat videlicet in ejus mente species eloquentiæ, quam cernebat animo, re ipsa non videbat. — Multa et in se, et in aliis desiderans, neminem plane qui recte appellari eloquens posset videbat. — Habuit profecto comprehensam animo quandam  
formam.

da Vinci is said to have conceived so high a standard of perfection, that, from despair of reaching it in the execution, he left many of his pictures unfinished. When imagination is inflamed and elevated by the perfection exhibited to it, it goes on of its own accord to fancy completer effects than artists have found means actually to produce: by reason of some unpliability in the materials employed, the *execution* seems always to fall short of our *conception*. No performer can excell in every thing: each is characterised by some predominant talent. The particular excellence of one enables us to discern the faultiness of another. And by combining the virtues that are dispersed among the different masters, into one image; as Zeuxis produced an Helen, by selecting, from many beautiful virgins, the parts that were in each most beautiful\*; we form in our minds a model of perfection, the parts of which, though taken from different originals, are rendered consistent, by the skill with which

formam eloquentis, cui quoniam nihil deerat, eos, quibus aliquid, aut plura deerant, in eam formam non poterat includere. — Ipse Demosthenes, quamquam unus eminet inter omnes in omni genere dicendi, tamen non semper implet aures meas: ita sunt avidæ et capaces: et semper aliquid immensum, infinitumque desiderant. *Cic. Orat.*

\* Plin. Hist. Nat. lib. 35. cap. 9.



they are articulated. A man of genius, possessed of so sublime a standard, endued with such exquisite refinement of taste, in whatever art he practises, will represent his objects, not merely as they are, but, like Sophocles, as they ought to be \*. A taste thus refined will not capriciously *reject* whatever it perceives to be deficient :

*Nam neque chorda sonum reddit, quem volt manus et mens ;*

*Nec semper feriet, quodcumque minabitur arcus.*

But it can be *satisfied* and *filled*, only with the highest perfection that is practicable.

REFINEMENT of taste exists only where to an original delicacy of imagination, and natural acuteness of judgment, is superadded a long and intimate acquaintance with the best performances of every kind. None should be studied but such as have real excellence ; and those are chiefly to be dwelt upon which display new beauties on every

\* Indeed the great masters in every art imitate, not so much individual nature, as a sublimer standard which exists only in their own conceptions. This Aristotle observes in poetry, *περὶ ποιητ. κεφ. 3.* The same is true of painting. See above, part 1. sect. 4. This subject is explained with equal solidity and elegance, by the author of *A Commentary and Notes on Horace's epistle to the Pisos*, note on ver. 317. *W. Hurd.*

review. The most conspicuous virtues will be at first perceived. Farther application will discover such as lie too deep to strike a superficial eye; especially if we aid our own acuteness by the observations of those whose superior penetration, or more accurate study, has produced a genuine subtilty of taste. An able master, or an ingenious critic, will point out to a novice, many qualities in the compositions of genius, or the productions of art, which, without such assistance, would have long, perhaps always, remained undiscovered by him. And repeated discoveries of this kind, either made by one's own sagacity, or indicated by others, beget in time an habitual refinement, a capacity of making similar ones with facility and quickness.

WHERE refinement is wanting, taste must be coarse and vulgar. It can take notice only of the grosser beauties, and is disgusted only with the most shocking faults. The thinnest disguise, the least depth is sufficient to elude its scrutiny. It is insensible to the delicacies of art and nature: they are too fine, and make too slight an impression to be observed. As savages can be touched with nothing but what excites the utmost extravagance of passion, so a gross and barbarous taste can relish nothing that is not either palpable or overdone. Chaste beauties it has  
not

not acuteness to perceive; complex ones it has not force enough to comprehend. Looking only to the surface, it often approves what is really faulty or defective, and is indifferent to what possesses the utmost elegance. Its decisions are, by consequence, disproportioned to the real merit of the objects: the most glaring, the least artificial performances are sure to gain the preference. It has been often remarked, that a certain grossness and want of refinement in the English taste, allows, and even demands a boldness, a grossness, and indelicacy, in their theatrical entertainments, which would be intolerable to the elegant taste of a French audience.

BUT an excessive or false refinement is equally to be avoided\*. It is like a weakly constitution, which is disordered by the minutest accident, or like a distempered stomach, which nauseates every thing. It is a capriciousness of mind, which begets an habit of constantly prying into qualities that are remote, of discovering imaginary delicacies,

\* True taste is a proper medium betwixt these extremes. "Ce discernement fait connoître les choses telles qu'elles sont en elles-mêmes, sans qu'on demeure court, comme le peuple, qui s'arrête à la superficie; ni aussi sans qu'on aille trop loin, comme ces esprits rafinez, qui a force de subtilizer s'évaporent en des imaginations vaines et chimeriques." *Entret. 4. d'Arist.*

or faults which none else can perceive; while one is blind to what lies perfectly open to his view; like the old philosopher who was so intent on the contemplation of the heavens, that he could not see the pit that had been dug directly in his way. Or it is a minuteness of taste, which leads one to seek after and approve trifling excellencies; or to avoid and condemn inconsiderable negligences, a scrupulous regard to which is unworthy of true genius. Or it is a fastidiousness of judgment, which will allow *no* merit to what has not the *greatest*, will bear no mediocrity or imperfection; but with a kind of malignity, represents every blemish as inextinguishable.

THIS depravity of taste has led many authors, studious of delicacy, to substitute subtilty and unnatural affectation \* in its stead. The younger Pliny says, “ The Gods  
“ took Nerva from the earth, when he had  
“ adopted Trajan, lest he should do any ac-  
“ tion of an ordinary nature, after this di-

\* Quintilian marks strongly some features of this vicious refinement, as it appeared among the orators of his time “ Tum demum ingeniosi scilicet, si ad intelligendos nos opus sit ingenio.—Nos melius, quibus  
“ sordent omnia quæ natura dictavit; qui non ornamenta quærimus, sed lenocinia.” *Inst. Orat. lib. 8. proæm.*

“ vine and immortal deed. For this noble  
 “ work deserved the honour of being the last  
 “ action of his life, that, the author of it be-  
 “ ing immediately deified, posterity might be  
 “ left in doubt, whether he was not really a  
 “ god when he performed it \*.” This is  
 mere subtilty, not true refinement; for it  
 has no solidity. Seneca, aiming constantly  
 at elegance, corrupted the Roman eloquence,  
 by introducing a childish prettiness, a profu-  
 sion of antithesis and point †. When poe-  
 try and eloquence are brought to perfection,  
 the next generation, desiring to excel their  
 predecessors, and unable to reach their end  
 by keeping in the road of truth and nature,  
 are tempted to turn aside into unbeaten tracks  
 of nicety and affectation. The novelty catches,  
 and infects the general taste. By its standard  
 the simplest and the correctest authors are  
 canvassed, secret meanings, artful allegories,  
 distant allusions, and the like fanciful quali-

\* *Dii cœlo vindicaverunt, ne quid post illud divinum,  
 et immortale factum, mortale faceret. Deberi quippe  
 maximo operi hanc venerationem, ut novissimum esset,  
 auctoremque ejus statim consecrandum, ut quandoque in-  
 ter posteros quæreretur, an illud jam Deus fecisset.*  
*Plin. Paneg. Traj.*

† This censure is passed on him by an unquestionable  
 judge. “ In eloquendo corrupta pleraque, atque eo perni-  
 “ ciosissima, quod abundant dulcibus vitiis.” *Quint. Inst.*  
*Orat. lib. 10. cap. 1.*

ties, are discovered and applauded, where they never were intended. Homer compares Menelaus, exulting at the sight of Paris, when advancing to engage him in single combat, to a hungry lion, when he seizes a deer or a wild goat \*. This similitude strongly and beautifully expresses the courage and alacrity with which he met his rival. But this does not satisfy some of his scholiasts. They will have Paris compared to a goat for his incontinence, and to a deer for his cowardice, and his love of music. In Jupiter's golden chain †, some have discovered an emblem of the excellence of absolute monarchy; and in Agamemnon's cutting off the head and hands of Antimachus's son ‡, have imagined an allusion to the crime of the father, who had proposed to lay *hands* on the ambassadors that demanded the return of Helen, and from whose *head* the advice to detain her had proceeded. False refinement dislikes on grounds equally chimerical and inadequate as those which procure its approbation. The delicacy of Aristarchus was so much shocked with Phœnix's horrible intention of murdering his father in the extravagance of his rage, that he cancelled the lines in which it is, with great propriety, related, on purpose to represent to

\* *Ιλιαδ.* γ'. ver. 21.

† *Ιλ.* θ'.

‡ *Ιλ.* λ'.

Achilles the fatal mischiefs that spring from ungoverned fury and resentment \*. The nicety of Rymer is disgusted with the cunning and villany of Iago, as unnatural and absurd, foldiers being commonly described with openness and honesty of character † To critics of this class, Homer's low similitudes, and simple manners, or Shakespear's irregularities and unharmonious numbers, are intolerable faults.

FALSE delicacy in critics may in some measure proceed from an excessive sensibility of taste, or subtilty of judgment indulged without distinction or reserve. But most commonly it is the offspring of vanity and ignorance. Pride leads us to affect a refinement which we have not; we know not in what real excellence consists; we therefore fix some partial or whimsical standard, and, judging by it, run into false elegance and capricious nicety. True taste penetrates into all

\* *Il. l. ver. 460.* Τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ βύλευσα, κ. τ. λ. This nicety Plutarch justly censures as capricious and ill applied: Ὁ μὲν ὢν Ἀρίσταρχος ἐξῶλε ταῦτα τὰ ἔπη. ἔχει δὲ πρὸς τὸν καιρὸν ὀρθῶς, τῷ Φοίνικος τὸν Ἀχιλλεῖα διδάσκοντος, οἷόν ἐστιν ὀργή, καὶ ὅσα διὰ θυμὸν ἄνθρωποι τολμῶσι, μὴ χρώμενοι λογισμῷ, μηδὲ παιδόμενοι τοῖς παρηγορήσι. Πῶς δὲ τὸν νεὸν ποιημάτων ἀκύνει.

† See Rymer's View of Tragedy, chap. 7.

the qualities of its objects, and is warmly affected with whatever it perceives. Its mimic, false refinement, fearful lest any thing should escape its notice, imagines qualities which have no existence, and is extravagantly touched with the chimeras of its own creation.

SECT.



## S E C T. VI.

*Of Correctness of Taste.*

**S**ENSIBILITY disposes us to be strongly affected with whatever beauties or faults we perceive. Refinement makes us capable of discovering both, even when they are not obvious. *Correctness* must be superadded, that we may not be imposed upon by false appearances; that we may neither approve shining faults, nor condemn modest virtues; but be able to assign to every quality its due proportion of merit or demerit.

**CORRECTNESS** of taste preserves us from approving or disapproving any objects but such as possess the qualities which render them really laudable or blameable; and enables us to distinguish these qualities with accuracy from others, however similar, and to see through the most artful disguise that can be thrown upon them. Though we never approve, or disapprove, when those characters, which are the natural grounds of either, are known to be wanting; yet we often embrace a cloud for Juno, we mistake the semblance for the substance, and, in *imagination*, attribute characters to objects, to

which they do not *in fact* belong. And then, though merely *fictitious*, they have as *real* an effect upon our sentiments as if they were genuine; just as the chimerical connexion between spirits and darkness, which *prejudice* has established in some, produces as great terror as if they were in *nature* constantly conjoined.

EVERY excellence is a middle between two extremes, one of which always bears some likeness to it, and is apt to be confounded with it. The right and the wrong are not separated by an uncontested boundary. Like day and night, they run insensibly into one another: and it is often hard to fix the precise point where one ends, and the other begins. In attempting it, the unskilful may readily misapply their censure or their praise. In every art sublimity is mimic'd by prodigious forms, empty swelling, and unnatural exaggeration:

*Dum vitat humum, nubes et inania captat.*

Some of Homer's images, admired by Longinus as eminently great, less judicious critics have, notwithstanding his authority, arraigned as monstrous and tumid \*. And many

\* Such as his description of Discord, already taken notice of, which is highly blamed by Scaliger. *Poet. l. 5. c. 3.*

passages which he rejects, would have given no offence to a judge of less correctness: he condemns as extravagantly hyperbolic, the image used by an orator to express the stupidity of the Athenians, “That they carried their brains in the soles of their feet \*;” which yet Hermogenes, a critic of considerable accuracy, approves. The former of these critics charges Gorgias with the tumid for calling vultures “living sepulchres †;” and the latter thinks the author worthy of such a sepulchre, for using so unnatural a figure ‡. But Boileau is of opinion, that it would escape all censure in poetry; and Bouhours adopts his sentiments ||. Lucan’s extravagance, and Statius’s impetuosity, are often on the confines of true majesty and vehemence; and Virgil’s correctness has sometimes drawn upon him an

\* This sentiment is ascribed by some to Demosthenes, by others to his colleague Hegesippus. It is blamed by Longinus, *περὶ ὑψ. τμη. λή.* But Hermogenes, *περὶ ἰδεῶν, τμ. α. κεφ. 5’.* admits it as a genuine beauty.

† Ταύτη ἔ τὰ τῷ Λεοντίνου Γοργίου γελᾶται γράφοντες, γύπες ἐμψυχοὶ τάτοι. ΛΟΓΓ. *περὶ ὑψους. τμη. γ’.*

‡ Τάφους τε γὰρ ἐμψύχους τὸς γύπας λέγουσιν, ὧν πέρ εἰσι μάλιστα ἄξιοι. ΕΡΜΟΓ. *περὶ ἰδεῶν. τμ. α. κεφ. ε’.*

|| Je doute qu’elle déplût aux poëtes de notre siècle, et elle ne seroit pas en effet si condamnable dans les vers. Boileau *Remarq. sur Longin.*; Bouhours, *La Man. de bien pens. dial. 3.*

accusation

accusation of flatness and enervation. Affecting graces, undistinguished glare, and false ornaments, border upon beauty, and sometimes gain the preference. This very circumstance has procured, from a florid taste, higher approbation to the poets of modern Italy, than to those of ancient Greece and Rome. Extravagance may be mistaken for invention; servility, for what is natural. It is no easy matter, in every case, to place a just barrier betwixt poverty and simplicity; confusion and agreeable intricacy; obscurity and refinement; prolixity and copiousness; languor and softness; enervation and perspicuity: or to distinguish the formal from the solemn; the excessive from the bold and masterly; or the stiff and insipid from the correct. Protogenes is said to have rendered his pictures void of spirit, by extreme care to obtain correctness; for which he is censured by Apelles, as not knowing when to give over\*. Cicero himself records and approves many turns of wit, which, to a *modern* taste, appear low or coarse; many of the ornaments which he recommends to an orator, would pass with us for mere pun and quibble. In the extremes,

\* Cum Protogenis opus, immensi laboris et curæ, supra modum anxie miraretur, dixit omnia sibi cum illo paria esse, aut illi melliora: sed uno se præstare, quod manum ille de tabula nesciret tollere; memorabili præcepto, nocere sepe nimiam diligentiam. *Plin. Hist. Nat. lib. 35. cap. 10.*

affectation and frigidity are very different from wit ; distortion of thought or illiberal buffoonery, from humour ; and scurrility or invective, from genuine ridicule : but there are particular instances, concerning which very good judges may hesitate, before they can assign them to one species or the other. Beauties and blemishes often so far resemble in their general appearance, that an imperfect taste may readily confound them ; approving where it should condemn, or blaming what merits praise. It is only a well-cultivated taste, implying vigorous judgment, sharpened by exercise, that can in every case pull off the mask, and certainly distinguish them.

CUSTOM enables us to form ideas with exactness and precision. By studying works of taste, we acquire clear and distinct conceptions of those qualities which render them beautiful or deformed : we take in at one glance all the essential properties ; and thus establish in the mind a criterion, a touchstone of excellence and depravity. Judgment also becomes skilful by exercise, in determining, whether the object under consideration perfectly agrees with this mental standard. While it is unaccustomed to a subject, it may, through its own imbecility, and for want of clear ideas of the characters of the kind, mistake resemblance for identity ; or

at

at least be unable to distinguish them, without laborious application of thought, frequent trials, and great hazard of error. But when use has rendered any species of exertion familiar, it easily and infallibly discriminates, where-ever there is the minutest difference. We grow so well acquainted with every form, and have ideas so perfectly adequate, that we are secure against mistake, when sufficient attention is bestowed. The real qualities of things are presented to taste pure and unmixed, in their genuine features and proportions, and excite sentiments entirely congruous.

JUSTNESS of taste extends still farther than to the distinction of counterfeit from real. We can compare the sentiments produced, and discover readily the different classes to which they belong. We not only feel in general *that* we are pleased, but perceive in *what* particular manner; not only discern that there is *some* merit, but also of what determinate *kind* that merit is. Though all the sensations of taste are, in the highest degree, analogous and similar; yet each has its peculiar feeling, its specific form, by which one who has a distinct idea of it, and possesses exactness of judgment, may mark its difference from the others. It is this which bestows precision and order on our sentiments.

Without

Without it, they would be a mere confused chaos : we should, like persons in a mist, see something, but could not tell what we saw. Every good or bad quality, in the works of art or genius, would be a mere *je ne sçai quoy*.

As a correct taste distinguishes the *kinds*, it also measures the *degrees*, of excellence and faultiness. Every one is conscious of the degree of approbation or dislike which he bestows on objects. But sometimes the ideas which we retain of these sensations are so obscure, or our comparing faculty so imperfect, that we only know in general, that one gratification is higher or more intense than another ; but cannot settle their *proportion*, nor even perceive the *excess*, except it be considerable. We are often better pleased at first with superficial glitter, or gaudy beauty, which, having no solidity, become, on examination, insipid or distasteful, than with substantial merit, which will stand the test of reiterated scrutiny :

———— *quæ, si propius stes,*  
*Te capiet magis ; —*  
*Judicis argutum quæ non formidat acumen.*

But as the perceptions of an improved taste are always adequate to the merit of the objects ; so an accurate judgment is sensible, on comparison,

parison, of the least diversity in the degree of the pleasure, or pain produced. And if we have ascertained those qualities which are the causes of our sentiments, reflection on the degrees of them which things possess, will help to regulate our decision, and prevent our being imposed upon by any ambiguity in our feelings ; giving us both an exacter standard, and an additional security against judging wrong.

THE accuracy of taste may become so exquisite, that it shall not only discriminate the different kinds and degrees of gratification, but also mark the least varieties in the manner of producing it. It is this accuracy, habitually applied to works of taste, that lays a foundation for our discovering the peculiar character and manner of different masters. A capacity for this, as it implies the nicest exactness, is justly assigned as an infallible proof of real and well-improved taste.

INCORRECTNESS of taste may arise, either from the dullness of our internal *senses*, or from the debility of *judgment*. The former renders our sentiments obscure and ill-defined, and therefore difficult to be compared. The latter incapacitates us for perceiving the relations even of the clearest perceptions, or the most distinguishable qualities. In either case,



case, the mind is distracted with suspense and doubt. This is an uneasy state, from which we are desirous to extricate ourselves by any means. If we have not vigour of taste enough, to determine the merit of the object, by its intrinsic characters, we take up with any standard, however foreign or improper, that can end our wavering. Authority in all its forms usurps the place of truth and reason. The usage of an admired genius will procure approbation even to *faults*, from one whose taste is languid. He is unable readily to detect them; and their being committed by so great a master, and intermixed with many beauties, will keep him from even suspecting that they can be wrong; and consequently prevent his scrutiny. Like the spots of the sun, which cannot be discovered by the naked eye, the faults of an eminent genius require something more to enable us to discern them, than the elements of taste which nature bestows: till these are invigorated by culture, those will disappear in the general splendor. The *genius* of Shakespear may betray an unformed taste into an approbation of the *barbarities* which are often mingled with his beauties. The wits of King Charles's court are said to have allowed Cowley an undistinguished admiration. One may be too much pleased with Congreve's wit, to remark its incongruity to the characters

to which it is ascribed. The veneration which we have for antiquity, aided by the show of learning which acquaintance with it implies, and by the malignant joy which envy feels in depreting contemporaries, often stamps a value on its productions, disproportioned to their intrinsic merit :

— *Et nisi quæ terris semota, suisque  
Temporibus defuncta videt, fastidit et odit.*

The opinion and example of others often recommends to us what is fashionable or new, without our taking the pains to examine it. And their opinion is often, not founded on judgment, but dictated by interest, friendship, enmity, or party-spirit : “ Every period of  
“ time has produced bubbles of artificial fame,  
“ which are kept up a while by the breath of  
“ fashion, and then break at once and are annihilated. The learned often bewail the  
“ loss of ancient writers, whose characters  
“ have survived their works ; but, perhaps, if  
“ we could retrieve them, we should find  
“ them only the Granvilles, Montagues,  
“ Stepneys, and Sheffields of their time, and  
“ wonder by what infatuation or caprice they  
“ could be raised to notice \*.” False or imperfect rules, either established by ourselves, or implicitly received from others, may corrupt

\* Rambler, N<sup>o</sup> 106.

rupt or constrain our taste, and render our decisions unjust. Had criticism in its infancy fallen into the hands of one in judgment and penetration inferior to Aristotle, a greater number of precarious and unnatural rules than are now admitted, might have long obtained an undisputed authority. A prevailing turn and disposition of mind often makes us unable to relish any thing but what falls in with it, and thus perverts and prejudices our judgment. Hence generally proceeds the depravity of public taste, and the pernicious influence which it has on public entertainments and dramatic works : and hence, in a great measure, the connexion of the taste of a people with their morals.

THESE corruptions of taste can be avoided only by establishing within ourselves an exact standard of intrinsic excellence, by which we may try whatever is presented to us. This standard will be established by the careful study of the most correct performances of every kind, which are generally indeed the most excellent. But though they should only rise to mediocrity, they are fitter for laying the foundation of correctness, than such as are far superior on the whole, but faulty in some particulars : for the greater the beauties, the readier are the faults to debauch the taste. Till it is formed, and has acquired considerable

vigour, it is dangerous to be much conversant with those productions, the virtues of which are eminent, but blended with many faults. The chief utility of criticism lies in promoting correctness of taste. In the most imperfect essays, the authority of the critic will, at least, excite our attention, and provoke our inquiry. But every one who really merits the name, conveys much more momentous instruction, and more effectually teaches justness of thinking, by explaining the kind and degree of every excellence and blemish, by teaching us, what are the qualities in things to which we owe our pleasure or disgust, and what the principles of human nature by which they are produced.

CARE, however, must be taken to preserve our taste unconfined, though exact; to avoid that scrupulous formality, often substituted for true correctness, which will allow no deviation from established rules. To disapprove a transgression of a general law, when the spirit is observed, and when the end is, perhaps more effectually, promoted, is not *justness*, but *servility* and narrowness of taste. Who will dislike the landscapes of Poussin, though he has disregarded correctness of drawing in his animals? Parmegiano is said by good judges to owe the inexpressible greatness of manner in his pictures, to the neglect  
of

of just proportion in some of the members of his figures. A contracted taste is chiefly incident to those who would supply the want of natural talents by the drudgery of application. But, in every thing, the neat is essentially different from the finical, the exact from the precise, the regular from the formal.

## S E C T. VII.

*Of the due Proportion of the Principles of Taste.*

THE last finishing and complete improvement of taste results from the due proportion of its several principles, and the regular adjustment of all its sentiments, according to their genuine value ; so that none of them may ingross our minds, and render it insensible to the rest. This is justness and correctness, not confined to the parts of objects, but extended to the whole. Taste is not one simple power, but an aggregate of many, which, by the resemblance of their energies, and the analogy of their subjects, and causes, readily associate, and are combined. But every combination of them will not produce a perfect taste. In all compositions, some proportion of the ingredients must be preserved. A sufficient number of members, all separately regular and well formed, if either they be not of a piece with one another, or be in the organization improperly placed, will produce, not a comely and consistent animal, but an incongruous monster. In like manner, if our internal powers are disproportioned to one another,

or

or not duly subordinated in their conjunction, we may judge well enough of some parts, or of particular subjects, but our taste will be, upon the whole, distorted and irregular.

As an overgrown member, by drawing the nourishment from the rest, makes them weak and puny; so one of the principles of taste may, by its too great strength, take from the natural force and operation of the others; and, by attaching us entirely to its own gratifications, render us too little sensible of theirs, though perhaps equally, or more important. If, through an excessive liveliness of imagination, our sentiments of excellence and deformity be too violent, they will so transport us, as to prevent judgment from scrutinizing and comparing them: our taste may be sensible and feeling, but will be incorrect. A mind over fond of sublimity, will despise the less elevated pleasure which results from elegance and beauty. On the other hand, a soul devoted to the soft impressions of beauty, is unable to expand itself into the conception of sublimity. A prevailing relish for the new, the witty, the humorous \*, will render every thing insipid which

has.

\* Le poëte dont le talent principal est de rimer richement, se trouve bientôt prévenu, que tout poëme dont les  
rimes

has not, or cannot, suitably to its nature, have these qualities.

THE want of due proportion is one of the most fertile causes of false taste; and one of the most common sources of that variety of forms and modifications which true taste assumes in different persons. Every one has a predominant turn of genius and taste, by which his relish is more adapted to some one species of excellence than to others. This is inevitable, on account of the diversities incident to men in the natural bent of their temper and passions, which always renders them peculiarly accessible to some kinds of gratification or disgust. According as the

rimes sont négligées ne sauroit être qu'un ouvrage médiocre, quoi qu'il soit rempli d'invention, et de ces pensées tellement convenables au sujet, qu'on est surpris qu'elles soient neuves. Comme son talent n'est pas pour l'invention, ces beautés ne sont que d'un faible poids dans sa balance. Un peintre qui de tous les talents nécessaires pour former le grand artisan, n'a que celui de bien colorer, décide qu'un tableau est excellent, ou qu'il ne vaut rien en général, suivant que l'ouvrier a su manier la couleur. La poésie du tableau est comptée pour peu de chose, pour rien même, dans son jugement. Il fait sa décision sans aucun égard aux parties de l'art qu'il n'a point. Un poète en peinture tombera dans la même erreur, en plaçant au dessous du médiocre, le tableau qui manquera dans l'ordonnance, et dont les expressions seront basses, mais dont le coloris méritera d'être admiré. *Reflex. Crit. sur la poésie et sur la peinture, part 2. § 25.*

sublime



sublime or the humble passions, the grave or the lively, are predominant in the structure of the soul, our relish will be keenest for the grand or the elegant, the serious or the ludicrous. In this manner, the necessary imperfection of human nature prevents our ever being able to establish a proportion and œconomy of our internal senses, nicely accurate in every respect. A small disproportion is not censured, because it is natural: but, when it exceeds certain bounds, it is acknowledged to degenerate into a partial and distorted form. This distortion is not, however, so much owing to the original excess of one principle as to other causes. *That* lays the foundation of it; but *these* augment the natural inequality, and render it more observable. The principal of these causes is a narrowness of mind, by reason of which we cannot comprehend many perceptions at once, without confusion, nor trace out their relations, and ascertain their respective moment, without distraction and perplexity. We fix upon a part, we are ingrossed by the separate sentiment which it excites, we are blind to the nature of the other parts, or, at least, cannot extend our thoughts so far, as to combine them all into one conception. A due proportion of the principles of taste, presupposes the correctness of each, and includes, additional to that correctness,

ness, an enlargement and comprehension of mind.

THAT it may be acquired, all the internal senses must be equally exercised. If, by accidental difuse or perversion, any of them has fallen below its proper tone, it must, by particular attention, be again wound up to it. Habitual exercise promotes an harmonious subordination of the principles of taste, by producing a large compass of thought. It renders ideas and sensations so determinate and familiar, that the largest collections of them find room to lie distinctly exposed to the mental eye; and, at the same time, strengthens judgment to such a pitch, that it can view with ease the most complicated subjects, and decide with accuracy concerning them. Till this enlargement and extensive amplitude of taste is once acquired, our determinations must be essentially defective. Every art has a whole for its object: the contrivance, disposition, and expression of this is its main requisite: the merit of the parts arises, not so much from their separate elegance and finishing, as from their relations to the subject; and, therefore, no true judgment can be formed, even of a part, without a capacity of comprehending the whole at once, and estimating all its various qualities.

THOUGH

THOUGH pleasure and pain are counterparts in taste, our sense of them may be disproportioned and unequal. If uneasy and gloomy passions preponderate in the constitution, and form the prevailing temper, they produce a superior proneness to sentiments of disapprobation and dislike. The chearful and pleasurable affections, on the other hand, diffuse a tincture over all our powers, which makes us much more susceptible of admiration, than of its opposite. This inequality is frequently destructive of true taste. A perfect and faultless performance is not to be expected in any art. Our gratification must in every case be balanced against disgust; beauties against blemishes: before we have compared and measured them, we can form no judgment of the work. For want of the quickness and compass of thought requisite for this, or of inclination to employ it, we often err in our decisions. Excellencies and faults are sometimes united in the same part. A member may be so elegantly finished, as to gain the applause of the unskilful; but so unsuitable to its place, so prejudicial to the unity and effect of the whole, as to deserve the severest censure. But in every performance, beauties and blemishes are to be found in different parts. A contracted mind fixes on one or the other. It is related of Apollodorus, an ancient painter, that

that he destroyed his finest pictures, if he could discover in them any, even the minutest, fault. Some critics, as if they were possessed with the same frantic spirit, will condemn a thousand beauties of the highest rank, on account of a few intermingled faults, which bear no proportion to them, and do not perhaps at all affect the whole. On the contrary, the merit of a single part will strike a more candid judge so strongly, as to make him overlook multitudes of faults, which infinitely overbalance it.

BUT a person of true taste forms his judgment only from the surplus of merit, after an accurate comparison of the perfections and the faults. And indeed the greatest critics \* allow the chief merit, not to the greater *number*, but to the higher *rank* of beauties; not to that *precision* and constant attention to every trifle which produces a cold and languid mediocrity, but to a noble *boldness* of genius, rising to the height of excellence, with a kind of supernatural ardor which makes it negligent with regard to numberless *minutiæ*; in fine, not to that *faultless* insipidity which escapes our blame, but to that daring *exaltation* which, however shaded by

\* This subject is professedly examined by Longinus, *περὶ ὑψ. τμ. λγ.—λδ.*

inaccuracies, or even debased by the mixture of gross transgressions, forces our admiration. Demosthenes has been justly preferred to Hyperides, Archilochus to Eratosthenes, and Pindar to Bacchylides. A man should justly expose himself to a suspicion of bad taste, who approved a faultless, uninteresting tragedy, more than Othello, or King Lear; or who gave Waller greater applause than Dryden. Titian has been blamed for incorrectness of design; but he will ever hold a rank among painters far superior to Andrea del Sarto, who finished all his drawings with the most scrupulous care and diligence. Where eminent merit is found, real taste disdains the malignant pleasure of prying into faults \*.

—*Ubi plura nitent—non ego paucis  
Offendar maculis, quas aut incuria fudit,  
Aut humana parum cavit natura.*—

THUS we have explained the manner in which the principles of taste must be combined, to form its just extent; and the finishing which it must receive, in order to its per-

\* On leur répond qu'un poëme ou un tableau peuvent, avec de mauvaises parties, être un excellent ouvrage, &c. *Reflex. Crit. sur la poésie et sur la peinture, part 2. § 26.*

fection. As it necessarily includes both judgment, and all the reflex senses; so it must, by culture, be improved in sensibility, refinement, correctness, and the due proportion of all its parts. In whatever degree any of these qualities is wanting, in the same degree taste must be imperfect. Could any critic unite them all in a great degree, to his sentiments we might appeal, as to an unerring standard of merit, in all the productions of the fine arts. The nearer one comes to a complete union of these qualities of taste, the higher authority will his decisions justly claim. But when none of them is wanting, a peculiar predominance of one will by no means vitiate taste. They are so analogous, that an eminent degree of one will supply the place of another, and in some measure produce the same effect: or rather, perhaps, one cannot exist in full perfection, without implying all the rest, at least in an inferior degree. Longinus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Aristotle, all possessed fine taste: but it will scarce be denied, that the first peculiarly excelled in *sensibility*, the second in *refinement*, and the last in *correctness* and *enlargement*. There is none of the ancients, in whom all the four appear to have been more equally, or in a higher degree, combined, than in Quintilian.

BEFORE

BEFORE we conclude our researches, it will not be amiss to explain the place which taste holds among our faculties ; and to point out its genuine province, and real importance.

N 2

PART

## P A R T III.

## The Province and Importance of Taste.

## S E C T. I.

*How far Taste depends on the Imagination.*

**I**T has been observed above, that those internal senses from which taste is formed, are commonly referred to the *imagination*, which is considered as holding a middle rank between the bodily senses, and the rational and moral faculties.

It must be owned, that the vulgar divisions of our faculties are generally superficial and inaccurate. Our mental operations, though of all things the most intimately present to us, are of such a subtle and transitory nature, that, when they are reflected on, they in a great measure elude our view, and their limits and distinctions appear involved in obscurity and confusion. The common distribution of our most obvious powers, our external



ternal senses, is acknowledged to be faulty : much more may we expect inaccuracy, in the ordinary methods of classing such as are less generally attended to. All divisions of our derived and compounded powers must be liable to error, till the simple qualities from which they proceed, have been investigated.

IT sometimes happens, notwithstanding, that, by a kind of natural anticipation, we strike out juster divisions than could have been expected without reflection on the real foundation of them. This holds in the present case. [If we will but recollect and compare those qualities of human nature from which taste has been explained, we shall be convinced, that all its phænomena proceed, either from the general laws of *sensation*, or from certain operations of the *imagination*. Taste, therefore, though itself a species of *sensation*, is, in respect of its principles, justly reduced to imagination.]

THAT taste is properly a kind of sensation, can scarce be called in question, by any one who has clear and distinct ideas. [It supplies us with simple perceptions, entirely different from all that we receive by external sense, or by reflection.] These make us acquainted with the forms and inherent qualities

lities of things external, and with the nature of our own powers and operations : but taste exhibits a set of perceptions, which, though consequent on these, are really different ; which result from, but are not included in, the primary and direct perception of objects. They are however equally uncompounded in their feeling, as incapable of being conceived prior to experience, as immediately, necessarily, and regularly exhibited in certain circumstances, as any other sensations whatsoever \*. Taste is subject-  
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\* Indeed, as our external senses are *ultimate* and *original* principles, it may perhaps be taken for granted, that this circumstance is essential to the idea of a sense, and that no power of the mind can be properly expressed by this name, which is derived and compounded, and capable of being resolved into simpler principles. According to this hypothesis, the powers of taste would not be senses. To inquire, whether they are, or are not, may perhaps be deemed a dispute about words, as the determination will depend upon the definition of a sense. It is however of some real moment, that the powers of the mind be reduced into classes, according to their real differences and analogies ; and, therefore, that no definition be received which would disturb the regular distribution of them. And that the powers of taste may, with the greatest propriety, be reckoned senses, though they be derived faculties, will, it is hoped, appear from the following observations. We are directed by the *phenomena* of our faculties, in reducing them to classes. [The obvious phenomena of a *sense* are these. It is a power which supplies us with *such simple* perceptions, as cannot be conveyed by any other

ed to the same general laws which regulate our other senses. To trace out all these would

ther channel to those who are destitute of that sense. It is a power which receives its perception *immediately*, as soon as its object is exhibited, previous to any reasoning concerning the qualities of the object, or the causes of the perception. It is a power which exerts itself *independent of volition*; so that, while we remain in proper circumstances, we cannot, by any act of the will, prevent our receiving certain sensations, nor alter them at pleasure; nor can we, by any means, procure these sensations, as long as we are not in the proper situation for receiving them by their peculiar organ. These are the circumstances which characterise a sense. Sight, for instance, conveys simple perceptions which a blind man cannot possibly receive. A man who opens his eyes at noon, immediately perceives light; no efforts of the will can prevent his perceiving it, while his eyes are open; and no volition could make him perceive it at midnight. These characters evidently belong to all the external senses, and to reflection or consciousness, by which we perceive what passes in our minds. They likewise belong to the powers of taste: harmony, for example, is a simple perception, which no man who has not a musical ear can receive, and which every one who has an ear immediately and necessarily receives on hearing a good tune. The powers of taste are therefore to be reckoned senses. Whether they are ultimate powers, is a subsequent question. Those who are unacquainted with philosophy reckon all our powers ultimate qualities of the mind: but nature delights in simplicity, and produces numerous effects, by a few causes of extensive influence; and it is the business of philosophy to investigate these causes, and to explain the phenomena from them. [On inquiry, it appears, that the internal senses are not ultimate principles, because all their phenomena can be accounted for, by simpler qualities of the mind. Thus the pleasure

would be foreign to our subject. We shall mention but one law of sensation, which has been

pleasure we receive from beautiful forms is resolveable into the pleasure of facility, that of moderate exertion, and that which results from the discovery of art and wisdom in the cause. But, notwithstanding this investigation of the causes of our reflex sensations, we may continue to term them *senses*, since it does not contradict any of the phenomena, on account of which this name was originally bestowed upon them. [Beautiful forms have uniformity, variety, and proportion; but the pleasure they give us, is an immediate sensation, prior to our analysing them, or discovering by reason that they have these qualities.] We find, on examination, that uniformity and proportion are agreeable, as they enable us to conceive the object with facility; and variety, as it hinders this facility from degenerating into languor; and that all of them are agreeable, as being indications of art and skill; and thence we conclude, that the pleasant sentiment of beauty is the result of those simple principles which dispose us to relish moderate facility, and moderate difficulty, and to approve intelligence and design; but the sentiment of beauty arises, without our reflecting on this mixture. This sentiment is compound in its *principles*, but perfectly simple in its *feeling*. If this should seem to imply a contradiction, let it be remembered, that two liquors of different flavours may, by their mixture, produce a third flavour, which shall excite in the palate a sensation as simple as that which it receives from any of the ingredients. In like manner, the perception of whiteness is as simple as that of any colour; but philosophers know, that, in respect of its cause, it is compounded of the seven primary colours. Lord Verulam (*Nov. Org. lib. 2. aph. 26.*) concludes, from some experiments, that the external sense of taste is compounded of smell and touch. Suppose this conclusion just, taste would be a derived power; but still  
it

been so often hinted at already, and which, by its immediate effects and its remoter consequences, has so great influence on the sentiments of taste, that it will be proper in a few words to illustrate it. The law of sensation which we have in view, is this : When an object is presented to any of our senses, the mind conforms itself to its nature and appearance, feels an emotion, and is put in a frame suitable and analogous ; of which we have a perception by consciousness or reflection. Thus,

it would be a distinct sense, as its perceptions are peculiar, and specifically different in their feeling both from odours and tangible qualities. Just so, each principle of taste is with reason accounted a particular sense, because its perceptions, however produced, are peculiar to it, and specifically different from all others. Each conveys perceptions, which, in respect of their feeling, are original, though the powers, by which they are conveyed, are derived. It is scarce necessary to observe, that our ascribing the sentiments of taste to mental processes is totally different from asserting that they are deductions of reason. We do not prove, that certain objects are grand by arguments, but we perceive them to be grand in consequence of the natural constitution of our mind, which disposes us, without reflection, to be pleased with largeness and simplicity. Reasoning may, however, be employed in exhibiting an object to the mind ; and yet the perception that it has, when the object is once exhibited, may properly belong to a sense. Thus, reasoning may be necessary to ascertain the circumstances, and determine the motive, of an action ; but it is the moral sense that perceives it to be either virtuous or vicious, after reason has discovered its motive and its circumstances.

difficulty

difficulty produces a consciousness of a grateful exertion of energy ; facility, of an even and composed motion of soul ; excellence, perfection, or sublimity, begets an enlargement of mind, and conscious pride ; deficiency or imperfection, a depression of soul, and painful humility. This adapting of the mind to its present object, is the *immediate* cause of many of the pleasures and the pains of taste which have been pointed out : and, by its *consequences*, it augments or diminishes many others. ] It is chiefly owing, for instance, to this law of sensation, that we find it difficult to dismiss, at once, any object which hath ingrossed our thoughts, and to turn in an instant to another \*. Every employment of the mind is attended with a correspondent disposition ; every object exhibited produces a suitable action of the mind. Now, though the actions of the mind often succeed one another with surprising quickness, they are not instantaneous : it requires some time to pass from one disposition to another. Every frame of mind has a kind of firmness, tenacity, or obstinacy, which renders it averse to quit its hold. Every sensation or emotion, as much as possible, resists diminution or extinction. Whenever, therefore, we attempt

\* Difficile est mutare habitum animi semel constitutum.  
*Quint. Inst. Orat. lib. 4. cap. 2.*

to banish an object which has engaged our notice, the congruous disposition which it had excited tends continually to recall it to our thoughts, and to interrupt our attention to a new object. Nay, farther, even after an object is removed, the frame which it produced, the *impetus* which it gave the mind, continues, and urges us to go on in the same direction ; it requires time and labour to destroy it. For this reason, if the succeeding object demand a different conformation of mind, our application to it must be less vigorous, and its impression fainter : but, if it be analogous to the preceding, it finds the suitable disposition already raised ; and therefore strikes the sense with all its force. The influence of this on the sentiments of taste, we have had occasion to remark in many instances. Hence, for example, the mighty efficacy which perceptions acquire in poetry or eloquence, by being introduced in a proper order, and with due preparation. Hence the influence of an habitual and prevailing temper or turn of mind, in enlivening congruous perceptions, and in debilitating such as are incongruous. As far as the sentiments of taste depend on these, or similar principles, so far they arise immediately from the general laws of sensation.

WE can explain our external senses no otherwise, than by marking their differences,
 reducing

reducing them to classes, and delineating the laws of exertion common to all, or peculiar to each. They are original qualities of human nature, not resolveable into any others more ultimate and simple ; but taste, in most of its forms at least, is a derivative and secondary power. We can trace it up to simpler principles, by pointing out the mental process that produces it, or enumerating the qualities by the combination of which it is formed. These are found, on inquiry, to be no other than certain exertions of *imagination*. That this may become more obvious, we shall briefly ascertain the nature and extent of imagination, by exhibiting a detail of its principal operations, as far as they concern the present subject.

IMAGINATION is, first of all, employed in presenting such ideas as are not attended with *remembrance*, or a conviction of their having been formerly in the mind. This conviction, which we call *remembrance*, is what distinguishes memory from all our other powers of perception. When I see any object, a ship suppose, for the first time, sense alone is exercised in perceiving it ; when I think of a golden mountain for the first time, imagination alone is employed : when I see the ship again, and know that I had seen it before, memory is exercised



exercised about it, in conjunction with sense ; when I think of the golden mountain a second time, and perceive that I had thought of it before, then memory, as well as imagination, is exerted. Imagination exhibits ideas of many objects which we never perceived, the conception of which, therefore, cannot be attended with remembrance. But even things which we have often formerly perceived, and which are most familiar to us, may be thought upon without our reflecting that we have perceived them formerly : we can simply conceive heat or cold, light or colour ; or we can consider them, not as what we have perceived in time past, but as what we may hereafter perceive. In this case, they are presented, not by memory, but by imagination.

MEMORY exhibits its ideas in the same form and order which belonged to the things perceived by sense. But the defect of remembrance in the ideas of imagination, as it prevents our referring them to their original sensations, dissolves the natural connexion of their parts. But when *memory* has lost their real bonds of union, *fancy*, by its associating power, confers upon them new ties, that they may not lie perfectly loose ; and it can range them in an endless variety of forms. When I recollect a city which I have lately seen, and conceive the several objects belonging to it,

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in the same order and positions in which I saw them ; this is the work of memory. Several years after, I try to form an idea of the same city ; I have forgotten many particulars ; imagination attempts to supply the defects of memory, and forms a picture of it in many respects different from the truth, varying the magnitudes, the distances, and the order of the objects : if I have occasion to visit it afterwards, I become sensible of this, and am surprised to find how great a part of my conception was the mere creation of fancy. When I hear of a city which I never saw, I endeavour to conceive it, and imagination gives its parts certain proportions, and combines them in a certain form.

MANY of the combinations of ideas which imagination produces, are representations of nothing that exists in nature ; and therefore whatever is fictitious or chimerical is acknowledged to be the offspring of this faculty, and is termed *imaginary*. But wild and lawless as this faculty appears to be, it commonly observes certain general rules, associating chiefly ideas of such objects as are connected by the simple relations of *resemblance*, *contrariety*, or *vicinity* ; or by the more complexities of *custom*, *co-existence*, *causation*, or *order*. It sometimes *presumes*, that ideas have these relations, when they have them not :  
but

but generally it discovers them where they are : and by this means it becomes the cause of many of our most important operations \*.

WHERE-EVER fancy supposes, or perceives in ideas, any of the uniting qualities just now mentioned, it readily, and with a kind of eagerness, passes from one idea to its associates. Thus, the picture of a friend transports the mind in an instant, by means of resemblance, to the conception of that friend ; and it introduces the recollection of many particulars in his character and conduct, by means of the relation which they bear to him as their cause. This effect might be illustrated by many obvious examples, with respect to all the associating qualities. Ideas to which they belong, are often so strongly connected by the imagination, that they become almost inseparable, and generally appear together. When one of them is conceived, no force can prevent the other from rushing into the mind. Many instances of this are obser-

\* For instance, some ideas are of such a nature, that whenever they occur, they impel to action. It is by making such ideas frequently occur, by constantly suggesting them, in consequence of the associating power of *custom*, that repetition produces the constant tendency and proneness to a particular action which is an essential part of every *active habit*.

vable every day ; particularly in the prejudices, the attachments, and the antipathies of men : and there have occurred, in the former parts of this essay, many instances of objects which please, or displease taste, only, or chiefly, by means of ideas which are associated with them, and suggested by them ; as in the sublimity of works of art, and in several kinds of beauty.

ONE of the most natural and immediate effects of association is, that, especially when the relation of ideas is close, and their union consequently strong, the transition from one to the other is so easy, that the mind takes in a long train of related ideas with no more labour than is requisite for viewing a single perception, and runs over the whole series with such quickness, as to be scarce sensible that it is shifting its objects. Hence it arises, that before we take notice of our having begun to wander, we often find, that we have departed very far from the subject which we were considering, and on which we perhaps did our utmost to keep our attention fixed : and when we set ourselves to inquire, how this has happened, we can sometimes recollect a succession of many ideas, which have passed through the mind with so great facility, that we did not at all observe them. Nay, we sometimes pass so easily from one perception

to another which it suggests, that it requires pains to make us sensible of the former. We attend little, for instance, to the sounds or characters of a language which we perfectly understand; our whole attention is bestowed on the things signified by them. Many of the perceptions of sight which suggest ideas of tangible qualities, are never almost reflected on. This easy transition from one perception to others associated with it, has been discovered to have a very extensive and multifarious influence on the sentiments of taste. Whenever our pleasure arises from ideas associated with an object, and suggested by it, it is their being instantaneously suggested that renders the object striking; and very many of the pleasures of taste are of this kind: were force necessary for bringing them into view, it would disturb the operations of the soul, and destroy all our pleasure. We scarce at all perceive the excellencies or the blemishes of a poem or oration written in a language which we understand but imperfectly: the difficulty which we find in passing from the words to the thoughts expressed by them, prevents the exertion of the powers of taste. In painting, if the features, the attitudes, and the disposition of the figures, do not suggest the subject very quickly, and without tedious study, taste becomes dull, and the pleasure is lost.

. IMAGINATION proceeds a step farther: When a number of distinct ideas are firmly and intimately connected, it even combines them into a whole, on account of the facility with which all the groupe is taken in, and considers them as all together composing only one perception. This is the origin of all our complex perceptions. It is fancy which thus bestows unity on number, and unites things into one image, which, in themselves, and in their appearance to the senses, are distinct and separate. By this operation too, fancy has great influence on taste: for all the objects that affect taste, and excite its sentiments, are certain forms or pictures made by fancy, certain parts or qualities of things which it combines into complex modes.

IDEAS which are thus compounded, or which are, even without composition, only associated, communicate, by the closeness of their relation, their qualities to one another. A perception, by being connected with another that is strong, or pleasant, or painful, becomes itself vigorous, agreeable, or disagreeable. The parts of complex perceptions are so intimately united, that the generality seldom reflect on their being distinct; and philosophers cannot analyse them without some study and attention. We are accustomed to consider them all as making but one

one perception; they are all in the mind at once; and therefore we cannot naturally distinguish from what precise part of a complex perception a particular sentiment results, but must ascribe the sentiments arising from any of the parts to the perception in general. When a perception communicates its qualities to another introduced by it, the reason of the phænomenon is obvious from the principles which we have established. The disposition with which the mind contemplated the first, has a degree of firmness which makes force requisite to destroy or change it; the strength of the union which transports the mind easily from the one perception to the others, keeps this force from being applied: the disposition, therefore, which the first produced, continues while we view the others; and we imagine, by a kind of illusion, that they produced the disposition which, in reality, was brought to the perception of them; and we ascribe to them the qualities which are necessary for its production. Finally, a perception weak, or indifferent in itself, is sometimes rendered strong, or pleasant, or painful, by its introducing an idea which has these qualities. A perception which is indifferent, may, notwithstanding, be fit to engage our attention, either on account of those which accompany it, or on account of the effects of those qualities of things which it represents,

represents, or for some other reason. Thus perceptions of touch, which are neither pleasant nor painful, engage our attention, because of the great dependence which our welfare or our hurt have on the tangible qualities of bodies. But a perception which is indifferent, excites no emotion; and the indifference with which it was contemplated, is readily swallowed up by any emotion that happens to succeed it. In this case our attention continues fixed on the perception itself; but the frame with which it was contemplated, is scarce felt, and is quickly forgotten. On the other hand, a perception may be such as in itself we are not apt to attend to, and yet may, by its strength, its agreeableness, or its disagreeableness, excite a very sensible emotion, which engages our notice, and remains for some time in the mind. Now, when a perception of the first kind introduces one of the second kind, the frame with which the former perception is conceived, and the latter perception itself, are disregarded; and the former perception, and the emotion excited by the latter, being the principal objects of our notice, we naturally conjoin them, and ascribe the emotion to that perception which did not really excite it, but only introduced its immediate cause. From the fitness of associated perceptions to communicate their qualities, particularly their  
strength



strength or vivacity to each other; arises, in a great measure, the force of sympathy, which enlivens our *ideas* of the passions infused by it to such a pitch, as in a manner converts them into the passions themselves, and which affects the perceptions of taste in many instances formerly remarked.

IF indeed the connected perceptions have such a degree of relation as unavoidably leads us to compare them, the phænomenon that has been mentioned will be reversed, the effect of the *comparison* overbalancing that of the *association*. A perception will appear less strong, less pleasant, or less painful, than it really is, by being introduced by one which possesses a greater degree of these qualities, if it is at the same time compared with it.

IMAGINATION sometimes operates so strongly, as not only to associate, or even combine, but also to confound together ideas or sensations that are related, and to make us mistake one for the other. This is the cause of our often ascribing the pleasure or the pain which results merely from our own operations, to the objects about which they happen to be employed; and of our confounding together objects or ideas which are contemplated with the same or a like disposition. It is likewise the source of many figures

gures in which one thing is used for another, as metaphor, denomination, allusion, and the like.

IMAGINATION does not confine itself to its own weak ideas; but often acts in conjunction with our senses, and spreads its influence on their impressions. Sensations, emotions, and affections, are, by its power, associated with others, readily introducing such as resemble them, either in their feeling or direction. Nay, they are capable of a closer union than even our ideas; for they may not only, like them, be *conjoined*, but also *mixed* and blended so perfectly together, that none of them shall be distinctly perceivable in the compound which arises from their union. Hence the effects so often mentioned, of concomitant emotions.

ALL these are operations of imagination, which naturally proceed from its simplest exertions; and these are the principles from which the sentiments of taste arise. That these sentiments arise from imagination, does by no means imply, that they are fantastical, imaginary, or unsubstantial. They are *universally* produced by the energies of fancy, which are indeed of the utmost consequence, and have the most extensive influence on the operations of the mind. By  
being.

being compounded with one another, or with other original qualities of human nature, they generate most of our compounded powers. In particular, they produce *affection* and *taste* of every kind; the former, by operating in conjunction with those qualities of the mind which fit us for action; the latter, by being combined with the general laws of sensation.

S E C T.

## S E C T. II.

*Of the Connexion of Taste with Genius.*

**T**ASTE may be considered either as an essential *part*, or as a necessary *attendant* of genius, according as we consider genius in a more or less extensive manner. Every one acknowledges, that they have a very near connexion. It is so evident, that it has almost passed into a maxim, That the ablest performers are also the best judges in every art. How far the maxim is just, will best appear, by briefly determining the nature and principles of genius.

THE first and leading quality of genius is *invention*, which consists in a great extent and comprehensiveness of imagination, in a readiness of associating the remotest ideas that are any way related. In a man of genius, the uniting principles are so vigorous and quick, that, whenever any idea is present to the mind, they bring into view at once all others that have the least connexion with it. As the magnet selects, from a quantity of matter, the ferruginous particles which happen to be scattered through it, without  
making

making an impression on other substances; so imagination, by a similar sympathy, equally inexplicable, draws out from the whole compass of nature such ideas as we have occasion for, without attending to any others; and yet presents them with as great propriety, as if all possible conceptions had been explicitly exposed to our view, and subjected to our choice.

AT first, these materials may lie in a rude and indigested chaos: but when we attentively review them, the same associating power which formerly made us sensible of their connexion, leads us to perceive the different degrees of that connexion; by its magical force ranges them into different species, according to these degrees; disposes the most strongly related into the same member; and sets all the members in that position which it points out as the most natural. Thus, from a confused heap of materials, collected by fancy, genius, after repeated reviews and transpositions, designs a regular and well-proportioned whole \*.

THIS brightness and force of imagination

\* This operation of genius, in designing its productions, is described with all the beauties of poetical expression, in *The pleasures of Imagination*, b. 3. ver. 348. to 410.

throws a lustre on its effects which will for ever distinguish them from the lifeless and insipid productions of inanimated industry. Diligence and acquired abilities may assist or improve genius: but a fine imagination alone can produce it. Hence is derived its inventive power in all the subjects to which it can be applied. This is possessed in common by the musician, the painter, the poet, the orator, the philosopher, and even the mathematician. In each, indeed, its form has something peculiar, arising either from the degree of extent and comprehension of fancy; or from the peculiar prevalence of some one of the associating qualities; or from the mind being, by original constitution, education, example, or study, more strongly turned to one kind than the others.

A GENIUS for the fine arts implies, not only the power of invention or design, but likewise a capacity to express its designs in apt materials. Without this, it would not only be imperfect, but would for ever lie latent, undiscovered, and useless. It is chiefly the peculiar modification of this capacity which adapts a genius to one art rather than another. To form a painter, the ideas assembled by fancy must give him a view of their correspondent objects, in such order and proportion as will enable him to exhibit  
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the original to the eye, by an imitation of its figure and colour. To form a poet, they must lead the thoughts, not to the corporeal forms of things, but to the signs with which, by the common use of language, they are connected; so that he may employ them with propriety, force, and harmony, in exciting strong ideas of his subject.

CULTURE may strengthen invention; knowledge is necessary for supplying a fund from which it may collect its materials; but improvement chiefly affects the capacity of expression. Painting requires a mechanical skill, produced by exercise; music, a knowledge of the power of sounds, derived from experience; poetry and eloquence, an acquaintance with all the force of words and instituted signs, an advantage which can be obtained only by careful study.

THUS genius is the grand architect which not only chuses the materials, but disposes them into a regular structure. But it is not able to finish it by itself. It needs the assistance of taste, to guide and moderate its exertions. Though the different relations of the parts, in some measure, determine the form and position of each, we acquire much ampler assurance of its rectitude, when taste has reviewed and examined both the design

and execution. It serves as a check on mere fancy; it interposes its judgment, either approving or condemning; and rejects many things which unassisted genius would have allowed.

THE distinct provinces of genius and taste being thus marked out, it will be easy to discover how far they are connected. They must be connected in a considerable degree, since they both spring from imagination: but as it is differently exerted in each, their connexion will not be perfectly accurate and uniform.

GENIUS is not always attended with taste precisely equal and proportioned. It is sometimes incorrect, though copious and extensive. It is sometimes bold, yet can transfuse no delicacy or grace into its productions. But it is never found where taste is altogether wanting. The same vigour of the associating principles which renders genius quick and comprehensive, must bestow such strength on the several dependent operations of fancy which generate taste, as shall make that faculty considerably active and perceptive \*.  
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\* There is in one view a still closer connexion between genius and taste. A genius for the fine arts implies, at least, *sensibility* and *delicacy* of taste, as an essential part  
of



The genius of the greatest masters in every kind has not been more perfect than their taste. The models they have given are so finished and correct, that the general rules and precepts of the art, afterwards established by critics, are deduced from their practice, and the very same which they observed, though uninstructed. The epos was not subjected to rules when Homer composed the *Iliad*. Aristotle did not write his *Art of Poetry*, till after the greatest tragic poets of antiquity had flourished. These great originals possessed not only an excellent genius, but equal taste. The vigour of their imaginations led them into unexplored tracks; and they had such light and discernment, as, without danger of error, directed their course in this untrodden wilderness. Taste, united with genius, renders the effects of the latter like to diamonds, which have as great solidity as splendour \*.

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of it. By means of this, every form strikes a man of true genius so forcibly, as perfectly to enrapture and engage him, and he selects the circumstances proper for characterising it, and impresses them upon others, with the same vivacity that he apprehends them himself. See this elegantly explained in *A discourse on poetical imitation*, § 1.

\* Le bel esprit est de la nature de ces pierres précieuses, qui n'ont pas moins de solidité, que d'éclat. Il n'y a

BUT taste often prevails where genius is wanting; they may judge, who cannot themselves perform. The operations that depend on the imagination, may be vigorous enough to form a high relish, though it be destitute of that brightness and extension which is necessary for a comprehensive genius. The associating principles may be strong and active within their bounds, though these bounds be narrow. And soundness and strength of judgment may be possessed without considerable genius; but must always, if joined with any degree of the internal senses, produce acuteness and justness of taste. This rendered Aristotle the greatest of critics, though he was not, like Longinus, *blest with a poet's fire*.

It must however be acknowledged, that genius will always throw a peculiar brightness upon taste, as it enables one, by a kind of contagion, to catch the spirit of an author, to judge with the same disposition in which he composed, and by this means to feel every

rien de plus beau qu'un diamant bien poli et bien net; il éclate de tous côtez, et dans toutes ses parties.

*Quanta sodezza, tanto ha splendore.*

C'est un corps solide qui brille; c'est un brillant qui a de la consistance et du corps. 4 *Entret. d'Ariste et d'Eugene.*

beauty

beauty with a delight and transport of which a colder critic can form no idea. The fine genius of Longinus catches fire, as it were, from the mentioning of a sublime passage, and hurries him on to emulate its sublimity in his explication of it. Quintilian, by the same union of genius with taste, delivers his sentiments with the utmost elegance, and enlivens the abstractness of precept by the most beautiful and apposite figures and images.

S E C T.

## S E C T. III.

*Of the influence of Taste on Criticism.*

**A**S taste gives the last finishing to genius in the *author* or performer, so it is the fundamental ingredient in the character of the *critic*. The greatest refinement and justness of taste is necessary, but not alone sufficient, to qualify one for this office. A critic must not only *feel*, but possess that accuracy of discernment, which enables a person to *reflect* upon his feelings with distinctness, and to explain them to others.

TASTE perceives the particular beauties and faults, and thus supplies the facts for which we are to account, and the experiments from which our conclusions are to be deduced. But these conclusions cannot be formed without a vigorous abstracting faculty, the greatest force of reason, a capacity for the most careful and correct induction, and a deep knowledge of the principles of human nature. One does not merit the name of a critic, merely by being able to make a collection of beauties and faults from performances in the fine arts; to tell in general,  
that

that those please, these displease; some more, some less. Such particular observations fall as much short of genuine criticism, as a collection of facts and experiments does of philosophy; or a series of news-papers of a system of politics. They are its rude materials, and nothing more. And to exhibit them is the whole that taste can do.

IN order, therefore, to form an able critic, taste must be attended with a philosophical genius, which may subject these materials to a regular induction, reduce them into classes, and determine the general rules which govern them \*. In all this operation, respect must be had to the subjects in which the excellencies or blemishes reside, and to the similitude of the qualities themselves, or of the sentiments which they excite. These are the circumstances common to a variety of particular phenomena, which must regulate our distribution of them. It is not enough to discover

\* Nihil est quod ad artem redigi possit, nisi ille prius, qui illa tenet, quorum artem instituere vult, habeat illam scientiam, ut ex iis rebus, quarum ars nondum sit, artem efficere possit.—Omnia fere, quæ sunt conclusa nunc artibus, dispersa et dissipata quondam fuerunt, ut in musicis, — in hac denique ipsa ratione dicendi. — Adhibita est igitur ars quædam extrinsecus ex alio genere quodam, quod sibi totum *philosophi* assument, quæ rem dissolutam, divulsamque conglutinet, et ratione quadam constringeret. *Cic. de Orat. lib. 1.*

that we are pleased or displeased ; we must ascertain the precise species of either ; and refer it to the sentiment or the expression ; to the design or the execution ; to sublimity or beauty ; to wit or humour.

THE qualities common to the lower classes will naturally be determined first, by regular induction. But a true critic will not rest satisfied with them. By renewing the induction, and pushing it to a greater degree of subtilty, he will ascertain the less conspicuous properties, which unite several inferior species under the same genus\* ; and will carry on his analysis, till he discovers the highest kinds, and prescribes the most extensive laws of art, and thus arrives at the most universal distinctions that can be made, without falling into the uninstruative affirmation of mere excellence or faultiness in general †.

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\* Tum sunt notanda genera, et ad certum numerum paucitatemque revocanda. Genus autem est id, quod sui simileis communione quadam, specie autem differenteis, duas aut plureis complectitur partes. Partes autem sunt, quæ generibus iis, ex quibus emanant, subjiuntur. *Cic. ibid.*

† This order of proceeding from the more particular to the more general distinctions of our sentiments, may, perhaps, seem liable to an objection drawn from matter of fact : for it would appear, that critics have determined the most universal classes, but have not yet sufficiently ascertained

To complete the criticism, and render it truly philosophical, the common qualities of the

certained the species that are subordinate to them. The common defect with which they are charged is, that their observations are too general. This is undoubtedly the case, as criticism has been generally managed: and the reason is, that it has been seldom cultivated by a regular and just induction. It was long ago observed by Lord Verulam, that there are two kinds of induction; one imperfect and insufficient, which leads us at once from experiments to the most general conclusions; the other legitimate and perfect, but scarce ever used, which rises gradually from less general, to more general principles. "Duæ viæ sunt, atque esse possunt, ad inquirendam et inveniendam veritatem. Altera a sensu et particularibus advolat ad axiomata maxime generalia, — atque hæc via in usu est. Altera a sensu et particularibus excitat axiomata, ascendendo continenter et gradatim, ut ultimo loco perveniatur ad maxime generalia; quæ via vera est, sed intentata." *Nov. Org. lib. 1. aph. 19.* In criticism, as well as in philosophy, the former method has been generally practised. Indeed, in whatever regards sentiment, there is a peculiar temptation to pursue this course. For the very feelings excited by qualities that belong to different *genera*, being sensibly distinct, direct men, in some measure, to distinguish them, though not with sufficient precision. But it requires attention and acuteness to mark the smaller varieties of sentiment, which correspond to the species of each. The matter of fact objected only shows, therefore, that criticism has been cultivated by a wrong method of induction. The consequence has been, that even those general distinctions which appear to be ascertained, are loose, uncertain, and ill defined; a defect that can never be remedied, till the other sort of induction be applied, and critics be contented to rise from particular principles, gradually, to such as are

the several classes, both superior and subordinate, must be compared with the principles of human nature, that we may learn by what means they please or displease, and for what reason.

ALL this is included in perfect criticism, which requires therefore the greatest philosophical acuteness, united with the most exquisite perfection of taste. If taste is wanting, our conclusions must be defective, faulty, or precarious; if philosophical genius, our observations will be trifling, superficial, unconnected, and perplexed with too great particularity.

It has often been observed, that nature is the standard and archetype of all true rules of criticism. Indeed the fate of criticism has been similar to that of every species of philosophy: It has fallen into the hands of incapable professors, who, without any regard to the truth of nature, have attempted to prescribe rules formed by their own imaginations. The accidental usage of an eminent author on a particular emergency, has been converted into a standing law, and applied to

are more general. Thus only can our conceptions of all the sentiments of taste, and of the qualities by which they are excited, be rendered accurate and determinate.

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cases nowise similar: arbitrary restraints have been imposed without necessity, and even shining faults have been recommended as beauties. But these false systems of criticism, like their kindred ones in philosophy, have obtained only a local and temporary reception. Genuine criticism is evidently very different; and is justly esteemed a faithful transcript of nature. For it investigates those qualities in its objects which, from the invariable principles of human nature, must always please or displease; describes and distinguishes the sentiments which they in fact produce; and impartially regulates its most general conclusions according to real phenomena.

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S E C T.

## S E C T. IV.

*Of the Objects of Taste.*

WE have seen the importance of taste, both to the performer, and the judge. But its proper office and extensive influence will perhaps appear still farther, by considering its objects in a light somewhat different. It may be conceived as employing itself about *nature*, *art*, and *science*. With regard to *nature*, which is the common subject of the other two, taste and reason are employed in conjunction. In art, taste is the ultimate judge, and reason but its minister. In science, reason is supreme, but may sometimes reap advantage from using taste as an auxiliary.

As reason investigates the *laws* of nature, taste alone discovers its *beauties*. It fills us with admiration of the stupendous magnitude of the mundane system. It is charmed with the regularity, order, and proportion, which every part of that system displays, even to the most illiterate; with the beauty and variety of colours which tinge the face of nature; with the fitness and utility of all its productions; with the inexhaustible diversity and endless succession

ſucceſſion of new objects which it preſents to view. Flowers diſcloſe a thouſand delicate or vivid hues. Animals appear in comely ſymmetry. Here the ocean ſpreads forth its ſmooth and boundleſs ſurface; there the earth forms a verdant carpet. Mountains riſe with rugged majeſty; the valleys wear a pleaſant bloom; and even the dreary wilderneſs is not deſtitute of auſtine ſimplicity. The day is uſhered in by a ſplendid luminary, whoſe beams expoſe to view the beauties of the world, and gild the face of nature. And when the curtain of night veils terreſtrial objects from our eye, the wide expanſe appears ſpangled with ſtars, and opens the proſpect of multitudes of worlds paſt reckoning. Spring, ſummer, autumn, preſent us with natural beauties, in the ſucceſſive periods of their growth; and even ſtern winter leaves many objects undeſtroyed, from which a vigorous taſte may extract no inconfiderable degree of entertainment.

SCARCE any art is ſo mean, ſo entirely mechanical, as not to afford ſubjects of taſte. Dreſs, furniture, equipage, will diſcover a good or bad taſte: nay, the loweſt utenſil may be beautiful or ugly in the kind \*. But the

\* In how great a degree the beauty of theſe meaner ſubjects is regulated by the ſame principles, from which that of the nobler ſprings, appears in many inſtances produced by Mr Hogarth, in his *Analysis of beauty*.

finer arts, which imitate the excellencies of nature, supply it with more proper materials, and thence derive their merit. Music, painting, statuary, architecture, poetry, and eloquence, constitute its peculiar and domestic territory, in which its authority is absolutely supreme. In this department, genius receives its decrees with implicit submission; and reason is but its minister, employed to bring into view, and reduce into form, the subjects of which it is to judge.

THE sciences are susceptible, not only of truth or falsehood, but also of beauty or deformity, excellence or defect. As the former are primarily regarded, reason, by which they are distinguished, here reigns supreme, and is the immediate and proper judge of merit. Taste exercises only a subordinate jurisdiction, and must be employed in subservience to understanding. When this subordination is perverted, and taste is principally regarded, erroneous theories are introduced: Imagination is substituted for reason; prejudice supplies the place of evidence; plausible fables are embraced instead of solid truths. An immoderate attachment to novelty or antiquity, to sublimity or simplicity, has often in science given rise to whimsical principles, and distorted explications of the phenomena of things. To one or other of these causes

causes we may ascribe most of the systems of false philosophy that have ever prevailed in the world.

BUT taste, when under the entire control of reason, and used only as its assistant, is highly useful in science. It judges, not only of the manner in which science is communicated, but also of the matter itself. Every just conclusion, by extending our knowledge of nature, discovers some new beauty in the constitution of things, and supplies additional gratification to taste. The pleasure which attends the perceptions of this faculty, strongly prompts us to exert reason in philosophical inquiries, and, with unremitted assiduity, to explore the secrets of nature, that we may obtain that pleasure. By its approbation, it confirms the deductions of reason, and, by making us feel the *beauty*, heightens our conviction of the *truth*, of its conclusions. The Newtonian theory is not more satisfying to the understanding, by the just reasonings on which it is founded, than agreeable to taste, by its simplicity and elegance. As the operations of taste are quick, and almost instantaneous, it is sometimes disgusted with the bungling appearance of principles, and leads us to suspect them, before reason has had time to discover where the falsehood lies. A king of Spain, who had made considerable progress

in astronomy, is said to have been highly disgusted with the confusion and perplexity in which the Ptolemaic system involves the motions of the celestial bodies. His *reason* submitted to that hypothesis; but his *taste* disliked it. Instead of censuring the constitution of nature, he should have suspected the explication which represented it as irregular, and ill contrived. When the mundane system is truly explained, it appears to be adjusted with the nicest regularity and proportion; the sense of which at once confirms the theory, and fills us with admiration of the supreme wisdom.

S E C T.

## S E C T. V.

*Of the Pleasures of Taste.*

THE observations which we have made concerning the subjects of taste, not only ascertain its genuine province, but likewise, in some measure, evince its extensive utility and importance. It will not, however, be improper to complete our view of its advantages, by considering its effects, both immediate and remote.

IT is the *immediate* source of pleasures, not only innocent, but elegant and noble. The powers of imagination are a striking instance of the munificence of our creator, who has furnished us, not only with those faculties which are necessary for the preservation of our being, but with such also as may fit us for receiving a rich variety of enjoyment. And by the improvement of these powers, our pleasures may be still farther multiplied, and rendered more exquisite. A fine taste qualifies a man for enjoyments to which others are perfect strangers, and enables him to derive entertainment from almost every thing in art or nature. It enlarges his sphere of happiness, by yielding delights which employ the  
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mind without fatiguing it, and gratify without cloying.

THE pleasures of taste, though less improving than such as are intellectual, are often as great, generally more rapturous, always more universally attainable. We need but attend, and they are infused by every object, without labour or expence of thought. The beauties of nature are open to all : and though few can have the *property*, most men may have the *enjoyment*, of many of the wonders of art. The improvement of taste is easier, and more certain, than that of reason. Some are indeed incapable of the highest perfection of it : but few are so entirely destitute of the natural seeds of it, as not to receive some pleasure from its proper objects. Though all cannot attain such *justness* of discernment as may qualify them for being judges, or gain them authority as critics ; there are scarce any who may not acquire the *sensibility* that is requisite for their own gratification.

THE pleasures of taste are not, like the gratifications of external sense, followed by uneasiness or satiety, nor reflected upon with dissatisfaction. They are confessedly of an higher order. A relish for them adds dignity to a character, and commands no inconsiderable degree of esteem. A man who de-  
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votes a considerable part of his time to the gratification of sense, is an object of contempt or indignation : but a person who can fill up with pleasures of taste, those parts of life that afford no opportunities for social offices, who can find entertainment for many hours in a gallery of pictures, or in a collection of poems, is esteemed on this very account. Justness of taste procures an author as high a degree of reputation, as the most curious abstract disquisitions. Aristotle's critical works are more generally valued than his logic. To the latter he owed the veneration of his implicit followers ; a veneration which free inquiry has already extinguished : but on account of the former, all ages will probably admire him.

THE sentiments of taste spread a lustre over most of our enjoyments. The pleasures of sense and the external decorations of life would be insipid and despicable to every man of understanding, if ideas of elegance and magnificence, derived from taste, were not associated with them. Taste stamps a value upon riches, as the procuring of its gratifications is the great end for which they are desired, and the worthiest use to which they can be applied, the execution of benevolent and virtuous designs alone excepted.

## S E C T. VI.

*Of the Effects of Taste on the Character and Passions.*

**T**HE more remote advantages of taste arise from the influence which it has on the passions and the character.

THE passions, as well as taste, depend for their production on the *imagination*; and may therefore reasonably be expected to bear some analogy to it. Were it proper to enter on a full discussion of the origin of the passions, it might be shown, not only that they derive their existence, their particular turn, and their various degrees of strength, from the operations of fancy, but also that they owe them, in many instances, to the very same operations of fancy which produce the sentiments of taste. Fancy forms the pictures which affect taste, by compounding several distinct ideas into one whole; and these same pictures excite the passions. *Association* has a very great influence on taste; and every philosopher who has examined the affections with tolerable care, has remarked the great dependence which they have on association. Many of them arise from *sympathy*;

*pathy* ; and this principle is likewise the source of many sentiments of taste. Both our sentiments and our affections are often rendered more intense by the mixture of concomitant emotions. A strong imagination produces a vigorous and lively taste; and it is always attended with keen and ardent passions.

THUS taste and affection are effects of the same cause, streams issuing from the same fountain; and must therefore be in a considerable measure similar. They likewise mutually influence one another, and hence derive a farther similarity. We have remarked already, that the prevailing passion often enlivens the sensations of taste, and determines its particular form. Taste as often augments the vigour of the passions, and fixes their prevailing character. Present a mere abstract idea of good or evil, the mind feels no emotion. Mention a particular advantage or disadvantage, desire or aversion, joy or sorrow is immediately roused. Tell us that a man is generous, benevolent, or compassionate, or, on the contrary, that he is sordid, selfish, or hard-hearted, this general account of his character is too indefinite to excite either love or hatred. Rehearse a series of actions in which these characters have been displayed, immediately the story draws  
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out the affections correspondent. It is only a perception enlivened by fancy, that affects our active powers. A very general idea is so unstable, that fancy cannot lay hold of it: but when a particular idea is presented, the imagination dwells upon it, cloaths it with a variety of circumstances, runs from it to other ideas that are connected with it, and finishes such a picture of the object represented by that idea, as will infallibly produce a suitable affection. Now, if we examine the colours which imagination throws upon our ideas, in order to enable them to excite the passions, we shall find, that the greatest part of them are extracted from the sentiments of taste. Honours have a great influence on most men; but greatest on those whose taste is of such a nature as to give them a high relish of the magnificence and pomp which the possession of honours naturally procures. There is scarce any quality that recommends a person more strongly to our friendship, than a fitness for gratifying our taste in some way or other. A genius for music or painting will sometimes more speedily and certainly introduce a stranger to the notice or good offices of a man who is a tolerable judge in these arts, than more important accomplishments of which he is equally qualified to judge. A sense of beauty has generally much greater influence upon the amorous passion,  
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than the mere appetite for sensual pleasure; and is sometimes so powerful, as even to overbalance, in our choice, the natural approbation of agreeable mental qualities. An elegant entertainment is prepared, not to satisfy hunger, but to please fancy. We may perhaps venture to assert, that every appetite and passion in our nature, except avarice alone, or the love of money for the sake of hoarding, derives its origin and its vigour, in a great measure, from those ideas which imagination borrows from taste, and associates with the object of that passion. This being the case, the passions will naturally receive one tincture or other, in every man, according to the particular constitution of his taste.

WE find, by experience, such a connexion between the tastes and the passions of men, as these observations would lead us to expect. Great sensibility of taste is generally accompanied with lively passions. Women have always been considered as possessing both in a more eminent degree than men. Quickness of taste is essential to poetic genius; and Horace has assigned to poets the correspondent turn of passion, when he characterises them *genus irritabile*. A gross, uncultivated taste produces a grossness and indelicacy of passion: but where-ever a delicate taste prevails, it bestows a certain refinement and ele-

gance on our principles of action, which makes us despise many objects as gross and coarse which vulgar minds pursue with ardour ; and even when we are attached to the very same things with other men, it gives a peculiar politeness to our manner of affecting them. Savages have a grossness both of taste and of passion, which distinguishes them from civilized nations. The vulgar in every nation are distinguished by the same circumstance from the polite. Whatever quality gives a tincture to the taste of a nation, is found to tinge also the national character. The French have a peculiar delicacy of taste : and a peculiar vivacity and elegance runs through their manners. The irregularity and boldness of the English taste corresponds exactly with the general spirit of the nation. The stateliness which the Spaniards affect in their behaviour, is analogous to the loftiness which they approve in composition. It is no difficult matter to trace a like connexion between taste and character in individuals.

THIS connexion may be owing, in some measure, to the influence which the passions have on taste. But it can scarce be doubted, that it arises as frequently from the tincture which taste gives to the passions ; especially when we recollect, that the ideas which ex-  
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cite the passions are, in a great measure, derived from the sentiments of taste.

IF it should farther appear, that a just and well-regulated taste has a peculiar tendency to confirm virtuous affections and principles, its importance would be still more conspicuous. Those who have inquired, whether it has this tendency, seem to have run into extremes. Some represent those qualities in actions and affections which excite our moral approbation, as the same with those qualities which, in a picture, or a poem, produce the gratification of taste; and think that it is the same faculty which is pleased in both cases\*. But experience will scarce support this opinion. A taste for the fine arts, and a high sense of virtue, which, on this hypothesis, would be the same, are often separated: and a careful examination of the moral faculty, would probably lead us to derive it from other principles than those from which taste has been explained. There seems, however, to be as little reason for determining, with others, that taste has no influence upon morality†. It may be sepa-

\* This is often asserted, or very plainly insinuated, by Lord Shaftesbury. See *Characteristicks*, *passim*.

† This opinion is maintained by Mr Brown, *Essay on Characteristicks*, § 7.

rated from virtue; it may accidentally lead men to act viciously, for its gratification: but, that it is naturally more favourable to virtue than to vice, may be inferred from many of the acknowledged qualities of the human mind.

MOST wrong passions may be traced up to some perversion of taste which produces them,\* by leading us to misapprehend their objects. It would be almost superfluous to undertake a formal proof, that luxury, prodigality, ambition, arise chiefly from this cause. And it is evident, that if taste were perfectly formed, so as to discover that it is a false beauty or sublimity, or at least an inferior species, that belongs to these vices, or their objects; and if it were accustomed to the purer and nobler subjects about which it may be employed, those ideas which now mislead so many, must lose a great part of their influence upon them. Vice is often promoted by taste ill formed or wrong applied: let taste be rendered correct and just, vice will be almost extinguished; for our opinions of things will be, in most cases, true, and suited to their natures.

A MAN who is acquainted with high and noble pleasures, naturally despises such as are far inferior. A relish for the gratifications  
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of taste will enable a man, in some degree, to undervalue the pleasures of sense, and to disregard the calls of appetite, which are the greatest obstructions to the prevalence of good affections. A man of an improved taste puts very little value on sensual delights, except so far as they come to him recommended by an opinion of elegance. And it has been already observed, that a perfectly just taste would enable him to strip this commendation, in a great measure, of its force.

ANY sentiment, or affection, which is suitable to the prevailing bias of the mind, will derive peculiar strength from that bias. A just and elegant taste, frequently employed, puts the mind into an habitual disposition, more congruous to the agreeable feeling, and gentle impulses, of kind affection, than to the more tumultuous agitations of the rougher passions. The exercise of taste begets serenity and satisfaction. When these prevail, the mind is prone to benevolence. This affection finds the mind already in a temper suited to it; and it strikes deep its roots, as in a soil which supplies it with its natural nourishment, in great abundance. A man is seldom better disposed to friendship, generosity, love, and the whole train of kind affections, than when his mind has been softened,

by the charms of music, painting, or poetry. It is universally acknowledged, that these arts, when properly applied, are very powerful in recommending virtue. And their power arises, in a great measure, from the circumstances which we are now considering. Their immediate gratifications, by producing a congruous disposition, prepare the mind for being deeply impressed with the moral sentiments and affections which they are fitted to insinuate.

ALL the principles of the human mind have so near a connexion, that one of them can scarce be considerably altered, but it produces a similar alteration in the rest. A vigorous taste, not only is affected with every the minutest object, directly presented to it; but imparts also a peculiar sensibility to all the other powers of the soul. Refinement of taste makes a man susceptible of delicate feelings on every occasion; and these increase the acuteness of the moral sense, and render all its perceptions stronger and more exquisite. On this account, a man of nice taste will have a stronger abhorrence of vice, and a keener relish for virtue, in any given situation, than a person of dull organs can have, in the same circumstances. Hence it proceeds in part, that many actions are reckoned either virtuous or vicious by civilized nations, which  
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to savages appear perfectly indifferent. This may rather be ascribed to an elegance of taste gradually introduced by society, than to any peculiar disposition to virtue. The moral sense is, in savages, so dull, that the qualities of these actions are imperceptible to them, and their sentiments in other instances are weak in proportion. Civilized nations have delicacy sufficient to perceive moral qualities in actions, which make no impression on a savage; and this delicacy renders more vigorous, in proportion, the perceptions which they have from those actions that are approved or disapproved by savages themselves. Thus the cultivation of taste gives new force to the sentiments of the moral faculty, and by this mean renders it more powerful to repress the vicious passions, and support the virtuous.

It is likewise to be observed, that, though taste and the moral sense are distinct powers, yet many actions and affections are fit to gratify both. What is virtuous and obligatory is often also beautiful or sublime. What is vicious may be, at the same time, mean, deformed, or ridiculous. A man whose taste is uncultivated, has no motive in these cases, but what arises from the moral principle. A person of improved taste, not only has this in its greatest strength, but is capable of additional motives derived from taste; and having  
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thus a double impulse, must be more strongly prompted than the other. It must be acknowledged, indeed, that some vices appear sublime or elegant, and may therefore be recommended by taste. But they always have these qualities in a less degree than the opposite virtues. Superiority to external things is nobler than ambition. Admiration of these vices, therefore, implies a defect of just taste. Where this faculty is perfect, it always prefers virtue to vice.

IN order to give the foregoing observations their full weight, it is necessary to remember, that many different causes concur in forming the characters of men. Taste is but one of these causes ; and not one of the most powerful. It is not therefore to be expected that the character should be, in every instance, perfectly analogous to the taste. Other causes may counteract the influence of this principle, and render the turn of the passions, dissimilar to its structure. On this account, examples of a good taste joined with gross passions, or a vicious character, are far from being sufficient to prove that taste has no connexion with morals. This heterogeneous composition may be otherwise accounted for. All our conclusions concerning human nature must be founded on experience : but it is not necessary, that every conclusion should be *immediately*

*diately* deduced from experiment. A conclusion is often sufficiently established, if it be shown that it necessarily results from general qualities of the human mind, which have been ascertained by experiment and induction. This is the natural method of establishing synthetical conclusions; especially where an effect is produced by a complication of causes. This is the case in the subject of our present inquiry. The character and the passions are affected by many different causes, of which taste is one. Taste in the fine arts may appear to be wanting in some men, because they have had no opportunities of exercising it on subjects of that kind; while, at the same time, the natural principles of it being vigorous, and all men being conversant about the objects of affection, it may bestow a delicacy and refinement on the character. Affectation may disguise the passions, imitation may render them unsuitable to the turn of taste, habit may make them run counter to it; but taste has, notwithstanding, a natural tendency to influence them.

THE END.



T H R E E  
D I S S E R T A T I O N S  
O N  
T A S T E:

B Y

Mr De V O L T A I R E,

Mr D' A L E M B E R T,

A N D

Mr De M O N T E S Q U I E U.





## A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

*THE following essays, upon the same subject which Professor GERARD has treated in such a masterly manner, are the productions of three of the greatest and most elegant writers, that the French nation has ever produced. There can then be no doubt about their title to a place in this volume; which, by such a valuable addition, will contain, perhaps, all that can be said concerning the principles, the nature, the characters and extent, the rise and decline of true taste; matters hitherto injudiciously treated by many pens, and but superficially by the best. But notwithstanding the merit of these essays, it is owing to Mr GERARD's candid and generous permission, that they are admitted into a volume which was appropriated to his own excellent performance. The genuine love of truth dispels those anxious fears of rivalry, which are the result of a narrow and selfish ambition, and not of a noble and generous emulation. Besides, Mr GERARD's talents render such anxious fears entirely groundless. On the other hand, our ingenious Professor cannot be displeased, that his name should go down to posterity in company with those of MONTE-SQUIEU, D'ALEMBERT, and VOLTAIRE.*

*The essays of the two latter are finished pieces. That of the late President MONTE-SQUIEU is an imperfect fragment, an assemblage of scattered thoughts, the first strokes of his pencil, in which we see the noble subject sketched out in part, and the principal colours that enter into the composition of true taste thrown carelessly upon the canvas. For while the noble artist was drawing his outlines, and gathering materials for his work, he was seized with a disorder, which prevented him from giving it the finishing touch, and deprived the republic of letters of one of its brightest ornaments. The thoughts, however, of such an original genius, unconnected as they may be, will be highly acceptable to such as know that there is a true sublime always to be found in the first and most imperfect sketches of great masters, and that the rude designs of a RUBENS are infinitely more valuable than many a correct and finished piece.*

A N

E S S A Y

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Mr De VOLTAIRE.



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Mr De V O L T A I R E.

**T**HE external sense, with which nature has furnished us, and by which we distinguish and relish the various kinds of nourishment that are adapted to health and pleasure, has in all languages given occasion to the metaphorical word *taste*, by which we express our perception of beauty, deformity, or defect, in the several arts. *Taste* then, in general, is a quick discernment, a sudden perception, which, like the sensation of the palate, anticipates reflection; like the palate, it relishes what is good with an exquisite and voluptuous sensibility, and rejects the contrary with loathing and disgust; like the pa-

late also, it is often doubtful, and, as it were, bewildered, not knowing whether it should relish or reject certain objects; and frequently requires the influence of habit to give it a fixed and uniform determination.

To have a *taste*, supposes something more than merely to perceive, and to discern with accuracy, the beauty of any work or object. This beauty must be *felt*, as well as *perceived*; the mind must be touched and affected by it in a lively and sensible manner. This feeling, however, in order to constitute true *taste*, must not be a vague and confused sensation; but must be attended with a distinct view, a quick and comprehensive discernment of the various qualities, in their several relations and connexions, which enter into the composition of the object we contemplate. And in this we see another striking resemblance between the intellectual taste and the sensual one; for as a nice palate perceives immediately the mixture of different wines, so the man of taste will quickly discern the motley mixture of different styles in the same production; and, let the beauties and defects be ever so closely blended in an object, will always be capable of distinguishing the former from the latter.

As the corruption of the *sensual taste* discovers itself by a relish for only those delicate  
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and high-seasoned dishes, in which all the refinements of art have been employed to excite a forced sensation of pleasure; so the depravity of the *intellectual taste* manifests itself by an attachment to far-fetched and studied ornaments, and by a want of relish for those beauties which are unaffected and natural. The corruption of the sensual taste, which makes us delight in such aliments as are disgusting to those whose organs are in a good state, is in reality a kind of disease; nor is that depravity of the intellectual taste which makes many prefer the *burlesque* to the *sublime*, and the laboured stiffness of art to the beautiful simplicity of nature, less a disease in our mental frame.

THE *intellectual taste* is much more formed by education and culture, than the sensual one; for though the latter may be brought, by habit, to relish what at first excited loathing and disgust; yet it does not seem to have been the intention of nature, that the generality of mankind should acquire by custom and experience those sensations and perceptions which are necessary to their preservation. It is otherwise with the *intellectual taste*: its formation requires time, instruction, and experience. A young man, uninstructed in the arts of music and painting, let his natural sensibility be ever so quick and lively, will not immediately

immediately distinguish, in a grand concert of music, the various parts whose connexion and relation constitute the essence and charm of the composition, nor will he perceive in a picture the gradations of light and shade, that harmony of colours, that correctness of design, which characterise a finished piece; but in process of time, and also by degrees, he learns both to hear and to see in a more perfect manner. The same uninstructed person will find a variety of emotions arise in his mind, the first time he is present at the representation of a fine tragedy: but he will neither perceive the dexterity of the author in maintaining the unities; nor that exquisite art by which the drama is so managed, that no person enters upon the scene, nor quits it, without an evident reason; nor yet that still more nice and difficult art, of making the various subordinate interests terminate and centre in one, which absorbs them all. It is only by the force of habit and reflection, that he will distinguish these several objects of *taste*, and feel delightful sensations from circumstances of which formerly he had little or no idea.

ELEGANT and able artists may communicate their feelings and their discernment to others, and thus excite *taste* in a nation which, without them, had never known its refined



refined pleasures. | By frequently contemplating the works of great and eminent masters in the various arts, the powers of nature arise into *taste*, and we imbibe, as it were, the spirit of these illustrious men, so as to come at length to look at a gallery of paintings with the eyes of a Le Brun, a Poussin, or a Le Sueur; to hear the declamation of Quinault's operas, with the ear of a Lulli; and the airs and symphonies with that of a Rameau. Nay, we even read works of learning and genius with a portion of that spirit that appears in their composition.

IF, in the first periods of the culture of the arts and sciences, it has sometimes happened, that a whole nation have been unanimous in the praise of authors full of defects, and whom succeeding ages have beheld with indifference, and even with contempt; the reason is, that these authors had natural beauties which were perceived by all, while that just discernment that was necessary to distinguish their numerous defects, and which is less the gift of nature, than the result of time, habit, and reflection, was as yet acquired by none. Thus Lucilius, who had been in the highest reputation among the Romans, sunk into oblivion when Horace arose; and Regnier was universally admired by the French, until Boileau appeared: and if there are several ancient  
authors.

authors who have maintained their credit, notwithstanding the absurdities that are to be found in every page of their writings, it must be the authors of those nations among whom no judicious and correct writer has appeared to open their eyes, like Horace among the Romans, and Boileau among the French.

IT is a common saying, That there is no disputing about tastes : and if by *taste* here be understood the palate, which loaths certain aliments, and relishes others, the maxim is just ; because it is needless to dispute about what cannot be corrected, or to attempt reforming the constitution and mechanism of organs merely corporeal. But the maxim is false and pernicious, when applied to that *intellectual taste* which has for its objects the arts and sciences. As these objects have real charms, so there is in reality a good taste which perceives them, and a bad one which perceives them not ; and there are certain methods by which we may often correct those mental defects which produce a depraved *taste*. But it must be granted, at the same time, that there are certain phlegmatic spirits which nothing can inflame, and also certain distorted intellects which it is impossible to rectify ; with such, therefore, it is in vain to dispute about tastes, because they have none at all.

IN many things taste seems to be of an arbitrary nature, and without any fixed or uniform direction, such as in the choice of dress and equipage, and in every thing that does not come within the circle of the finer arts. In this low sphere it should be distinguished, methinks, by the name of *fancy*; for it is *fancy* rather than *taste* that produces such an endless variety of new and contradictory modes.

THE taste of a nation may degenerate, and become extremely depraved; and it almost always happens, that the period of its perfection is the forerunner of its decline. Artists, through the apprehension of being regarded as mere imitators, strike out into new and uncommon paths, and turn aside from the beautiful simplicity of nature, which their predecessors invariably kept in view. In these efforts there is a certain degree of merit, which arises from industry and emulation, and casts a veil over the defects which accompany their productions. The public, fond of novelty, applauds their invention. But this applause is soon succeeded by satiety and disgust. A new set of artists start up, invent new methods to please a capricious taste, and depart still further from nature than those who first ventured from its paths into the wilds of fancy. Thus the taste of a people degenerates into the grossest corruption. Overwhelmed

whelmed with new inventions, which succeed and efface each other with incredible rapidity, they scarcely know where they are, and cast back their eager and anxious desires towards the period when *true taste* reigned under the empire of nature. But they implore its return in vain; that happy period cannot be recalled: it deposits, however, in the custody of certain choice spirits the sublime pleasures of *true taste*, which they cherish, and enjoy, in their little circle, remote from the profane eye of the depraved and capricious multitude.

THERE are vast countries where *taste* has not yet been able to penetrate. Such are those uncultivated wastes where civil society has never been brought to any degree of perfection, where there is little intercourse between the sexes, and where all representations of living creatures in painting and sculpture are severely prohibited by the laws of religion. Nothing renders the mind so narrow, and so little, if I may use that expression, as the want of social intercourse. This confines its faculties, blunts the edge of genius, damps every noble passion, and leaves in a state of langour and inactivity every principle that could contribute to the formation of *true taste*. Besides, where several of the finer arts are wanting, the rest  
must

must necessarily languish and decay, since they are inseparably connected together, and mutually support each other. This is one reason why the Asiatics have never excelled in any of the arts: and hence also it is, that *true taste* has been confined to certain countries in Europe.

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R E F L E C T I O N S

On the Use and Abuse of

P H I L O S O P H Y

In matters that are properly relative to

T A S T E.

B Y

Mr D'ALEMBERT, F. R. S.

Member of the French Academy, of the Royal  
Academy of Sciences at Paris, and of the  
Royal Academies of Prussia and Sweden, &c.





# R E F L E C T I O N S

On the Use and Abuse of

## P H I L O S O P H Y

In matters that are properly relative to

### T A S T E\*.

**T**HE philosophical spirit, so celebrated by one part of our nation, and so decried by another, has produced different, and even contrary effects, according as we consider it with respect to the sciences, or in relation to the belles lettres. Operating in the sphere of science, to which it properly belongs, it has set limits to that passion for explaining all things which arose from the towering pride of system; but entering into the circle of belles lettres, it has presumed, on the contrary, to analyse our pleasures, to call before its tribunal the more

\* These Reflections were read by Mr d'Alembert before the French academy, the 14th of March 1757.

elegant feelings of the human mind, and to submit to its examination the various objects of *taste*. If the wise moderation which has been observed, in these latter times, by philosophers, in matters of science, has met with much contradiction; is it surprising, that the incroaching spirit of the new adventurers in literature has also been opposed? This philosophical spirit, applied to the objects of *taste*, must undoubtedly displease such of our writers as imagine, that, in matters of taste, as well as in those of a more serious kind, every paradox ought to be rejected, every new opinion banished, and that merely because it is new. This way of thinking, however, appears to me both unreasonable and pernicious: we cannot extend too far the liberty of examining, judging, and inventing, in matters of speculation and literary amusement, even though, in many cases, that liberty should be utterly unsuccessful in its efforts. The flight of genius must be unrestrained, since it is often in the midst of its wildest excursions that it creates the true sublime. Such also is the case with the faculty of reason, or the philosophical spirit. Let us therefore permit this discerning spirit to extend indiscriminately, though sometimes without success, its inspection to all the objects of our pleasures; and by that means put it in a capacity of striking out new paths,  
and

and conducting genius itself into unknown regions.

ONE of the great advantages of philosophy, in its application to matters of *taste*, is its being so admirably adapted to cure, or to prevent, that excessive veneration for a certain class of authors, which we may call by the name of *literary superstition*. It will justify our esteem of the ancients, by rendering that esteem rational, and reducing it within its proper bounds; it will prevent our admiring them in their defects; it will shew us their equals in several of our modern writers, who, because they have followed the models exhibited by the ancients, are so unreasonably modest, as to esteem themselves inferior to their masters. But it will be asked, Whether this method of analysing metaphysically matters of feeling and sentiment, will not be attended with many inconveniencies? Whether it will not often engage us to inquire into the reasons of things which have no reason at all; damp our pleasure, by leading us into the custom of discussing coldly what was designed by nature to touch and to inflame; and put such shackles upon true genius, as to render it servilely timorous, and check its enterprising ardour? Let us endeavour to give a satisfactory answer to these important questions.

TASTE,

TASTE, though far from being generally possessed, yet is by no means an arbitrary thing. This is a truth acknowledged on all sides, both by those who reduce *taste* to mere feeling and perception, and by those also who would bring it within the sphere of reasoning and discussion. But we must observe, at the same time, that all the beauties and perfections which appear in the productions of nature, or of art, are not properly the objects of *taste*; whose perceptions are less extensive than many are apt to imagine. There are certain charms of a sublime and striking kind, which equally affect all observers; and of which, consequently, all the various orders of mankind, in all ages and nations of the world, are competent judges. But there is also another species of beauty, which only affects those minds that are possessed of a certain delicacy of feeling, and which remains imperceptible to vulgar spirits. The beauties which belong to this class, are beauties only of a second order; because objects which excite the idea of grandeur, surpass those which affect us only by their gracefulness and elegance. The charms, however, of this second class of objects are those which it requires the most sagacity to discern, and the greatest delicacy to feel truly; and accordingly they abound most in those nations where social intercourse has contributed to the

the perfection of the arts, and multiplied the sources of pleasure and enjoyment. It is then in this class of beauty which is adapted to the contemplation of the discerning few, that we are properly to look for the objects of *taste*. These observations lead us naturally to define *taste* as *the faculty of distinguishing, in the works of art, the various qualities which are adapted to excite pleasure or disgust, in minds that are susceptible of delicate sentiments and perceptions.*

IF then *taste* be not an arbitrary thing, it must be founded on fixed and evident principles, by the application of which we may form a decisive judgment of all the various productions of art. The truth is, that the source of our pleasures and of our disgusts lies solely and entirely within ourselves; so that, if we reflect with attention upon our mental frame, we shall find there general and invariable rules of *taste*, which will serve as the criterion of beauty and deformity, in all the objects which the fecundity of the different arts presents to our view. From hence it follows, that the same philosophical spirit which obliges us, for want of sufficient evidence, to suspend every moment our inquiries about the nature and qualities of those objects that are without us, ought, on the  
contrary,

contrary, to animate our researches with respect to the objects and the nature of *taste*, which lies obvious to our examination, as it exists within us, and constitutes a part of our mental frame. The true philosopher will, at the same time, easily perceive, that this examination must be confined within proper limits. We must never, in our researches upon any subject, flatter ourselves with the hopes of rising to *first principles*, which a thick veil perpetually conceals from the eyes of mortals. To investigate the primitive and metaphysical cause of our various pleasures would be as chimerical a project, as to attempt explaining the operation of external objects upon our senses. But as the origin of our knowledge has been reduced to a small number of sensations ; so the sources of those pleasures that are relative to *taste*, may be traced out by a few evident observations upon the manner in which we perceive and feel. Thus far the true sage extends his researches ; but here also he stops, and descends from hence, as from first principles, to those consequences that result from his accurate observations.

IN analysing *taste*, we shall find many qualities necessary to the proper exercise of that perceptive power, which escape the notice of inattentive observers. It does not consist wholly

wholly in accuracy and rectitude of judgment, however rare and precious this quality may be, nor yet in a delicate sensibility alone. No : there is yet, farther, a considerable assemblage of senses and powers (if I may so speak) which enters into its composition, and which we must therefore carefully take into the account. A few examples will illustrate this observation. When we read a sublime piece of poetry, what are the powers and faculties of our nature to which the bard addresses himself ? They are various : sometimes he speaks to our imagination, sometimes to our affections, sometimes to our reason, but always to the external sense or organ of hearing. Verse is a species of harmony, with respect to which the ear is too delicate to admit of the least defect ; so that reason itself, upon some occasions, is obliged to make certain sacrifices to rhyme. A philosopher, then, with all his penetration, and delicacy of sentiment, will be an incompetent judge of poetry, if he has not a good ear. He will assert, that the pleasures which result from poetic harmony are merely chimerical ; that all authors, of whatever kind their productions may be, ought to address themselves alone to the understanding and the heart ; nay, by captious reasonings, he will cast an apparent ridicule upon the care and industry which are employed in arranging words and periods,

periods, so as to render them harmonious, and pleasing to the ear. Thus a natural philosopher who possessed no other external sense but that of *feeling*, would hold it as a thing impossible, that distant objects should operate upon our bodily organs; and would prove his assertion by sophistical arguments, to which no satisfactory answer could be given, as long as he was deprived of *sight* and *hearing*. Such is the case of that philosopher who, without a delicate ear, pretends to have a *taste* for poetry. He imagines he does no real injury to a poem, when, by transposing the words, he destroys their harmony and cadence; and he will attribute the languour and flatness which the poem acquires by this change, to the power of prejudice and custom, to which he acknowledges his own involuntary subjection. He will never once imagine, that, by breaking the measure, and transposing the words, he has destroyed the delightful harmony that resulted from their metrical arrangement and proportions. To judge, however, properly of such a conduct, we have only to ask ourselves, what we should think of a musician, who, to prove that the pleasure of melody is founded in opinion, and not in nature, should spoil a fine air, by destroying the proportion and symmetry of the sounds of which it was composed?



IT is not thus that the true philosopher will judge of the pleasures that arise from poetry. Avoiding wisely all extremes, he will neither attribute them entirely to *nature* on the one hand, nor wholly to *opinion* on the other. He will observe, that as all nations are more or less agreeably affected with the charms of music in general, though they may not all delight in the same particular kinds of melody; so, in like manner, they are all, in general, susceptible of pleasure from poetic harmony, though the poetry of one people may differ extremely from that of another. It is by examining attentively this difference, that the true sage will be able at length to determine how far the pleasures we receive from poetry and music are influenced by *habit*; what *real* additions they derive from thence, and what *imaginary* ones they receive from *opinion*. For he will ever distinguish between that pleasure which is the result of habit, and that which is arbitrary, and merely founded on opinion; a distinction hitherto not sufficiently attended to, in treating this subject, but which, notwithstanding, daily experience sufficiently justifies. There are certain pleasures that strike us immediately, and that pervade the soul the very moment that their objects are presented; there are others, which require time to produce their proper effect; which

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are received with indifference or disgust, until the mind has been modified by their action upon it to a certain degree, and are then enjoyed with the quickest sensations of delight. How often has it happened, that a piece of music which we have heard, for the first time, without any agreeable emotion, has excited afterwards in us the most ecstatic raptures, when, by its being often repeated, the ear has been at length able to distinguish its complicated charms, and to perceive the whole delicacy and force of its expression ?

THIS is a striking instance of the pleasures which arise from habit, and which must by no means be looked upon as arbitrary, because they may be, at first, received with indifference, and have the force of prejudice against them.

THUS a philosophical connoisseur will be careful to maintain every faculty and every sense in their respective privileges, and to attribute to a good ear the authority that belongs to it, in deciding concerning the merit of poetical compositions. But, at the same time, he will be far from thinking, that the poet's attention to please the external sense can justify his dispensing with the more important obligation of satisfying the reason and imagination of his readers, by the justness of his  
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his ideas, and the sublimity of his views. As he is persuaded that the first and most important rule of good writing requires a conformity between the style of an author, and the matter which he treats; so nothing will disgust him more, than common and trivial ideas expressed with affectation, and adorned with the vain pomp and harmony of poetry. A plain and easy prose will, in his opinion, be preferable to such numbers as derive their principal merit from their cadence, and little or none from the truths and sentiments which they are employed to embellish and set off. Feelingly sensible also of the charms of poetic imagery, he is, on that very account, pleased with such images alone, as are new and striking; and yet even to these he will prefer, without hesitation, those beautiful sentiments which unfold, in a noble and affecting manner, truths that are useful to mankind.

It must, however, be carefully observed, that though a philosopher be possessed of all that variety of senses and faculties that enter into the composition of true *taste*, yet this is not all that is required in the matter now under consideration; it is farther necessary, that the exercise of these faculties be not too much confined to one particular set of objects. The famous Malebranche could not read the

most sublime verses without a certain weariness and disgust; and yet his style abounds with all the grand characters of poetry, and is full of imagination, sentiment, and harmony: but his imagination, entirely occupied about matters purely intellectual, confined its energy to the creation of philosophical systems; and the high degree of feeling and vivacity with which he was endued, only served to make him embrace with ardour, as truth, what was no more than mere hypothesis. Though his prose was extremely harmonious, yet poetical harmony had no charms to him; which may perhaps be owing to one of the following reasons: either that the sensibility of his ear was confined to the harmony of prose; or that a mechanical and natural talent enabled him to write harmonious prose without his perceiving it, just as his imagination had served him in philosophy without his knowledge, or as a musical instrument produces, without consciousness, well-proportioned sounds.

IT is not only to a want of delicacy in the mind, or of sensibility in the external organs of perception, that we are to impute all erroneous judgments in matters of *taste*. The pleasure we receive from any excellent production of art, is, or may be derived from different sources. The true philosophical  
analysis

analysis consists, therefore, in distinguishing well these various sources, and keeping them separate from each other, that so we may refer to each what properly belongs to it, and may not attribute our pleasures to causes that have had no sort of influence in their production. It has been observed, that the rules of each art should be taken from the most excellent compositions which each respective art has furnished; and the observation is undoubtedly just. It is not however by the confused aggregate of pleasure, by the collective result of the agreeable perceptions, which these compositions have produced in us, that we are to fix the rules of *taste*; but by that reflex act of the mind, which enables us to distinguish the particular passages that excited in us delightful sensations, from those which were only designed as shades in the piece, or as resting-places for the exhausted attention of the reader, and also from those where the author has exhibited marks of involuntary negligence. For want of observing this method, the imagination, warmed by certain beauties of the noblest kind, which may shine forth in a work, otherwise full of the most monstrous defects, will gradually become insensible of these defects; nay, will transform them into beauties, and conduct us at length to that stupid enthusiasm, which, by admiring every thing indiscriminately, per-

ceives, or rather feels, nothing truly. Thus, by a confused and mechanical impression, many will be led either to establish false rules of *taste*, or, what is equally pernicious, to substitute arbitrary notions in the place of fixed principles, to contract the sphere of the arts, to prescribe bounds to our pleasures in order to render them insipidly uniform, and to confine the efforts of genius and industry within a narrow circle.

It is the province of philosophy to break these inglorious bonds asunder; but she cannot be too circumspect in the choice of the arms by which this noble deliverance is to be accomplished. The late Mons. De la Motte maintained, that versification was not essential to dramatical compositions; but to prove an opinion so susceptible of a rational defence, he injudiciously lanced into paradox, wrote against poetry in general, and thereby did nothing but injury to his cause. He might as well have wrote against music of every kind, in order to prove, that the chorus is not essential to tragedy. This ingenious writer was under no necessity of combating the prejudices of the public against his opinion, by such senseless paradoxes. There was, methinks, a much shorter way of proving his point; and that was, to have composed his celebrated tragedy of *Inés de Castro* in prose. The affect-

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ing nature of a subject so tenderly interesting, should have encouraged him to venture upon this innovation ; and thus the theatre would have been enriched with a new species of dramatic poetry. But an ambitious desire of being distinguished from the croud, leads men sometimes to combat, in theory, received opinions, while a timorous self-love, that dreads all new and dangerous attempts, through the apprehension of miscarrying, obliges them to follow those very opinions in practice. It is here that we may observe a considerable difference between the philosopher and the legislator : the latter dispenses, in his private conduct, with the laws which he imposes upon others ; while the philosopher observes in his works the rules which he condemns in his preface.

THE two sources of error which we have been hitherto considering, *viz.* the want of sensibility, on the one hand, and the want of that reflection which is requisite to distinguish the true causes of our pleasures, on the other, will be the occasion of perpetuating that tedious controversy, so often renewed, and so injudiciously carried on, the merit of the ancients. Their advocates, under the impulse of an enthusiastic admiration, are too prone to exalt their productions upon the whole, on account of the striking beauties  
that

that appear in some of the parts; while their adversaries refuse those applauses that are due to the parts, on account of the defects that appear in the whole.

THERE is, however, another error into which the philosophical critic is more liable to fall, and to avoid which, he must consequently employ his principal attention. This error consists in applying to the peculiar objects of *taste*, principles, which, though true in themselves, yet have no relation to these objects. Every one is acquainted with those lines in the tragedy of the Horatii,

*Que vouliez vous qu'il fit contre trois ? Qu'il mourut.*

*Ou qu'un beau desespoir alors le securût \*.*

The

\* To enable those who don't understand the French language to enter into the true spirit of this ingenious criticism, it will be proper to observe, that in Corneille's tragedy of the *Horatii*, a messenger arrives to inform the old Horatius, that two of his sons were killed, and that the third was flying from the three Curatii. The venerable old man is filled with indignation at the conduct of his remaining son. The messenger, to excuse him, addresses himself thus to the incensed father: "What other resource had he than flight, overpowered, as he was, by three combatants?" "A glorious death," replies the old Horatius, "or that succour that is administered by a noble despair." These words, *A glorious death*, which  
are



The heroic expression of the aged father, *Qu'il mourut*, has been justly and universally admired; and the following verse as justly and universally condemned; and yet the common principles of metaphysics will furnish arguments, or rather sophisms, to justify this verse against all the rules of true *taste*. It will be alledged, for instance, that this second verse is necessary to express all the feelings that passed in the mind of the old Horatius: for though it was his duty to prefer the death of his son to a life of dishonour; yet it was still more natural to wish, that his son might escape by the means of his valour; and that, animated by a *noble despair*, he might stand alone against his three adversaries, and return victorious from the combat. This defence, however plausible upon metaphysical principles, is absolutely misapplied in the case before us, where the question is not concerning the mere expression of truth and nature, but concerning such expressions of both as are striking and sublime. According to the reasoning of the metaphysical critic, the second verse, as it contains the sentiment that is the most natural of the two, should

are equivalent to *Qu'il mourut*, conclude the first line in the French, and give us a striking instance of the true sublime. What follows is censured by Mr D'Alembert for the excellent reasons offered in his elegant observations on this passage.

have

have preceded the first, which, by that means, would have lost the greatest part of its force. Besides, nothing more feeble, flat, and frigid, than this second verse, even when restored to its true and natural place. For where is the necessity for the old Horatius's expressing the desire which that verse contains? Will not every one suppose, without difficulty, that it would have been infinitely more rejoicing to him to have seen his son living, and crowned with victory, than falling a victim to the superior force of his enemies? The poet then had no occasion to express a desire which every one must suppose. The only sentiment which suited that violent state of emotion in which the venerable old man now was, the only affection which was proper to be discovered upon such an occasion, and in circumstances, where the glory of his country and of his name were immediately concerned, was that heroic courage which engaged him to chuse for his son a noble death rather than a life of dishonour and infamy. | The cold and tardy reasonings of slow and phlegmatic spirits are very different from the sudden and prodigious bounds, which minds, nobly fired, make towards the true sublime: the latter, disdaining to remain, even for a moment, in the sphere of vulgar sentiments, understand much more than they express, and soar with a rapid flight

flight to those sentiments and passions that carry the strongest marks of energy and grandeur. Their progress resembles that of one of Homer's gods, whose fourth stride brought him from one end of the universe to the other.

THUS then it happens, that, in matters of *taste*, the demi-philosopher (if I may employ that term) leads us from the paths of truth and nature, to which it is the province of true philosophy to restore our wandering steps. It is therefore an injury done both to the belles lettres and to philosophy, to imagine that they are either incompatible with, or prejudicial to each other. Whatever relates to our ideas and perceptions, and even to our sentiments and feelings, is the true domain, the proper sphere of philosophy. It would therefore be as unreasonable to confine her to the heavenly bodies, or to the material system of the universe, as it would be to limit poetry to the praises of the gods, or the pleasures of love. The true spirit of philosophy is so far from being in opposition to *taste*, that it is, on the contrary, its most solid support, as it teaches us always to set out from true and evident principles; to observe, that every art has its peculiar nature, every situation and affection of the mind its proper character, and every object its distinctive

tive colouring, and thus prevents our confounding the limits by which the various kinds are so carefully distinguished. Such is the nature, excellence, and power of the philosophical spirit, the abuse of which shews that it is not truly possessed.

IT has been remarked by some, that the submitting the objects of *taste* to analytical discussion is adapted to blunt the delicacy of the feeling powers, and to damp the fire and vigour of genius. But this effect is not to be feared. The true philosopher knows, that, in the moment when genius creates and invents, it will not admit of the least check or restraint; that it loves to rush forward without control and without rule, to produce indiscriminately the monstrous and the sublime, and to carry down its rapid stream gold and mud mingled together by the impetuosity of its course. Reason, therefore, gives to genius, while it creates, a boundless liberty, and even permits it to continue its career until it exhausts its vigour, and sinks down to repose; like those fiery couriers, which it is impossible to tame any other way than by throwing the bridle upon their necks. But then it is the time for reason to exercise its authority, and to sit in judgment upon the productions of genius. Accordingly, it preserves whatever was the offspring of a true

true and noble enthusiasm, effaces, on the contrary, whatever was produced by the irregular fallies of an overheated imagination, and thus enriches the republic of letters with masterly performances in all the various kinds. Where is the writer of genius and *taste*, who does not perceive, in the heat of composition, that one part of his mind (if I may so express myself) separates itself from the other which is employed in composing, in order to observe its motions, and to give them a free course, and also points out beforehand what is afterwards to be effaced?

THE true philosopher uses much the same method in judging of the productions of others, that he employs in composing his own. He begins by giving himself up to the high and lively sensations of pleasure which generally arise from the first impression that a new and masterly performance makes upon the mind. Persuaded, however, that real beauties gain in proportion as they are attentively examined, he recollects himself; extends his researches to the causes of his satisfaction; singles them out one after another; distinguishes carefully between illusory sensations and deep and lasting impressions; and, by this analytical procedure, is rendered capable of pronouncing with judgment concern-

ing the merit of a work in general, and of each of its particular and constituent parts.

FROM these observations, we shall be furnished with an answer to a question which has been often proposed, and also much debated, *viz.* Whether, in judging concerning a work of *taste*, sentiment or feeling is to be preferred before reasoning and discussion? *Feeling* is undoubtedly the natural judge for the first moment; *Discussion* for the second; and the second judge will, almost always, confirm the decisions of the first, in those persons who, with a quick and delicate sense of beauty, are so happy as to possess a just and accurate discernment. But the difficulty, it will be alledged, still remains: for as sentiment and discussion will not always be agreed, what must be done when they differ? Is it not best in all cases to follow sentiment as our guide, and hold always by its decision? Is it not a miserable occupation, will many ask, to be disputing against our agreeable sensations? and what obligations shall we lie under to philosophy, if it manifestly tend to diminish our pleasures? We cannot answer this latter question without the utmost regret; because we are obliged to acknowledge the effect of philosophy to be, in reality, what it is here represented to be.

SUCH

SUCH is the unhappy lot of humanity, that the knowledge we acquire serves only to give us a mortifying view of the scenes of error and illusion through which we have passed, and is, almost always, attended with the diminution of our pleasures. The rude simplicity of our ancestors rendered the impressions they received from the monstrous productions of the ancient theatre, more lively and striking, than those which we receive, in this polished age, from the most perfect of our dramatic performances. The nations which we surpass in knowledge, and in refinement, are not less happy than we are; since both their desires and their wants are less numerous than ours, and they are satisfied with pleasures of a less elegant kind than those which we pursue. We should not, however, be willing to exchange our knowledge for the ignorance of those nations, or for the rude simplicity of our ancestors. For though this knowledge may diminish our pleasures, yet it flatters our vanity. We applaud ourselves on account of that delicacy, and refinement, that render us difficult to be pleased, and even look upon them as meritorious. Self-love is the reigning passion, and that which, generally speaking, we are the most eager to gratify. The pleasure we derive from thence, is not, like many others, the effect of a sudden and violent impression;

it is uniform and permanent, and may therefore be enjoyed at leisure.

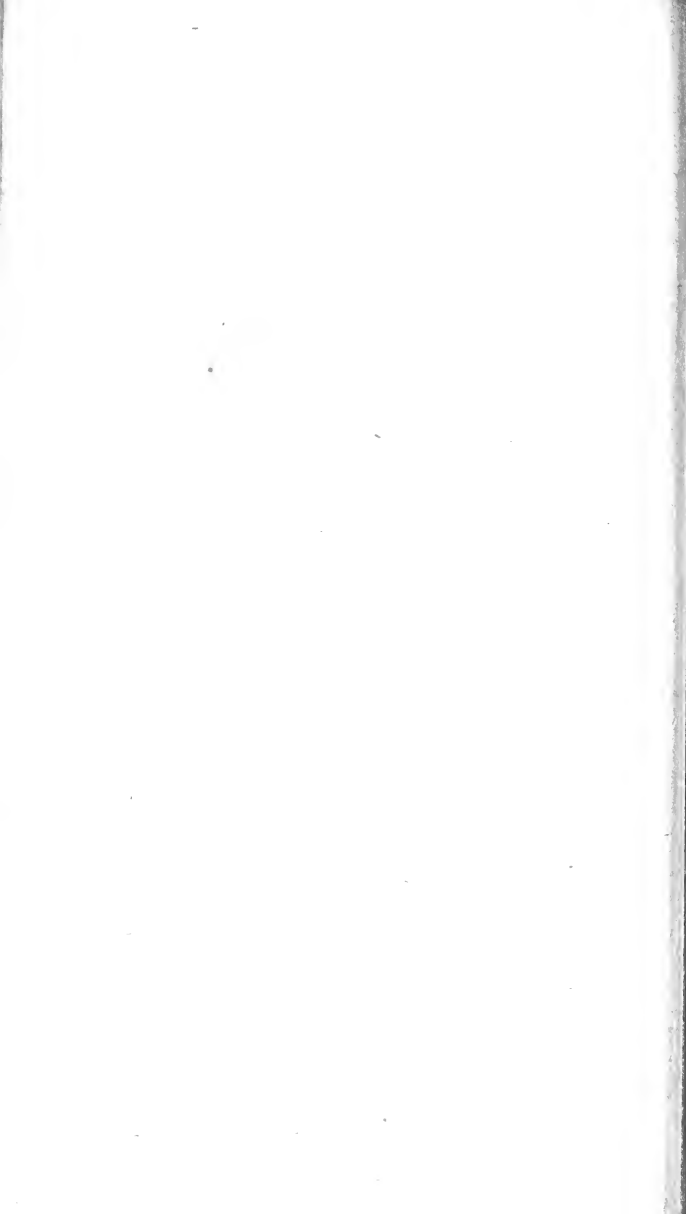
THESE reflections, methinks, will be esteemed sufficient to justify philosophy from the accusations that have been brought against it by ignorance and envy. We cannot however conclude, without observing, that, even upon the supposition that these accusations and reproaches were just, yet they lose their influence, and become unseemly, when they are not made by philosophers themselves. To them alone it belongs to determine the sphere, and to fix the boundaries, of the philosophical spirit; as it belongs only to those who have wit, to plead against the abuse that may be made of it. But it unluckily happens, in opposition to this rule, that those who have the least acquaintance with philosophy, are its most violent detractors; just as poetry is decry'd by such as have no talent for that noble art; the profound sciences, by such as are ignorant of their first principles; and the age we live in, by those writers whose productions are the most adapted to expose it to contempt.



A N  
E S S A Y  
O N  
T A S T E.

Considered with respect to the productions  
both of NATURE and ART.

A Fragment found imperfect among the papers of  
The late President De MONTESQUIEU.



## A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

**T**HE President De MONTESQUIEU, though one of the greatest writers of this or any other age, was not without certain defects. The affectation of depth rendered him sometimes obscure; and a passion for novelty of thought, and analytical refinement, led him frequently astray. If the following fragment abounds with fine thoughts upon the sources of our intellectual pleasures, it must, at the same time, be acknowledged, that its ingenious author has advanced therein some propositions that are absolutely false, others that are perhaps trivial, several that are somewhat obscure, and a few which the translator confesses he does not understand at all. These last are given in the original French; and thus the superficial thinker, who may flatter himself that he understands them, will not be deprived of the pleasure of an imaginary discovery; nor the profound inquirer, who may understand them in effect, lose any thing that came from the pen of the great MONTESQUIEU.



A N  
E S S A Y  
O N  
T A S T E.

A Fragment found imperfect among the papers of  
The late President De MONTESQUIEU.

**T**HE constitution of human nature in its present state, opens to the mind three different sources of pleasure; one, in its internal faculties and essence; another, in its union with the body; and a third, in those impressions and prejudices that are the result of certain institutions, customs, and habits.

THESE different pleasures of the mind constitute the proper objects of *taste*, those objects

objects which we term beautiful, good, agreeable, natural, delicate, tender, graceful, elegant, noble, grand, sublime, and majestic, as also the qualities to which we give the name of *je ne sçai quoi*. When, for instance, the pleasure we enjoy in the contemplation of any object is accompanied with a notion of its utility to us, we call that object *good*; but when an object appears merely agreeable, without being advantageous, we then term it *beautiful*.

THE ancients do not seem to have fully apprehended this important distinction: they considered as things of a *positive* nature, those qualities, or rather perceptions, which are merely *relative* to the nature and operations of the soul. Hence, those dialogues so celebrated by the ancients, in which Plato gives us an ample account of the reasonings of his great master, are, in our times, unsusceptible of a rational defence, because they are founded upon the principles of a false philosophy. All the reasonings they contain concerning goodness, beauty, perfection, wisdom, folly, hardness, softness, &c. are entirely inconclusive \*; as they suppose these  
various

\* This observation is entirely erroneous: for granting *goodness, beauty, hard, soft, &c.* to be merely perceptions of the mind, and nothing really existing *without us*; yet if these perceptions be invariably excited by certain objects,  
and

various perceptions to be what they are not, real and positive qualities.

THE sources, therefore, of beauty, goodness, &c. lie within us; and of consequence, when we inquire into their causes, we do no more than investigate the springs of our mental pleasures.

LET us then turn the eye of the mind upon itself, examine its inward frame, consider it in its actions and its passions, and contemplate it in its pleasures, in which its true nature is best discovered. It derives pleasure from poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, dancing; in a word, from the various productions of nature and art. Let us, therefore, inquire into the reasons that render these objects pleasing, as also into the manner of their operation, and the times and circumstances in which they produce their agreeable effects, and thus give an account of our various feelings. This

and not by others; if they arise uniformly when these objects are presented; they form, of consequence, fixed and permanent relations, which render all the reasonings founded on them as conclusive, as if these perceptions were the inherent qualities of external objects. The translator thought this error of too much consequence to pass it over in silence.

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will contribute to the formation of *taste*, which is nothing more than the faculty of discovering, with quickness and delicacy, the degree of pleasure which we should receive from each object that comes within the sphere of our perceptions.

*Concerning the pleasures of the mind.*

THE mind, besides those pleasures which it receives by the organs of sense, enjoys others which are peculiar to its spiritual nature, and are absolutely independent on external sensation. Such are the pleasures that arise from curiosity; from the ideas of its own existence, grandeur, and perfections; from the faculty of taking a general and comprehensive view of things, of contemplating a great variety of objects, and of comparing, combining, and separating its own ideas. These pleasures, which are attached to the nature of every intelligent being, depend not upon the external senses, but reside in the very essence of the soul: and it is needless to inquire, whether the soul enjoys them in consequence of its union with the body, or not; all that is necessary for us to know is, that it enjoys them always, and that they are the true and proper objects of *taste*. We shall not, therefore, take any notice here of the distinction that may be made between  
the



the pleasures that the soul derives from its own essence, and those that result from its union with the body, but shall comprehend both these kinds of enjoyment under the common name of *natural pleasures*. These pleasures we must, however, distinguish from others that have certain connexions with them, and which we may call *acquired pleasures*. In the same manner, and also for the same reasons, we distinguish between the *taste* which is *natural*, and that which is *acquired*.

IT is of great use, in researches of this kind, to know the source of those pleasures of which *taste* is the rule or measure ; since the knowledge of our pleasures, whether *natural* or *acquired*, will contribute much towards the rectifying the two kinds of *taste* that correspond to them. We cannot truly appreciate our pleasures, nor indeed enjoy them with a proper relish, if we do not carefully examine the nature of those pleasures, and their first springs in the human constitution.

IF our souls had not been united to material substances, they would still have been capable of knowledge ; but it is probable they would have loved whatever they knew : whereas, in the present constitution of things, we scarcely love any thing but that of which we are ignorant.

THE constitution of our nature is an arbitrary thing; we might have been otherwise constituted than we are at present; and, in that case, our perceptions and feelings would have been quite different from what they now are. An external organ of sensation more or less would have given rise to a species of poetry and eloquence totally different from that which takes place at present; nay, even another contexture of the organs we possess, would have changed vastly the nature of poetry. For instance, had the constitution of our mental and bodily powers rendered our attention and application of mind more vigorous and constant than what they are at present, this circumstance would have prevented the existence of those rules which are designed to adapt the disposition of a subject to that measure of attention of which we are capable: had we been naturally endowed with a more perfect degree of sagacity and penetration, all the rules which are founded upon the degree which we now possess, must have been entirely different: in a word, all the laws that derive their existence and authority from a certain constitution of our nature, would have been totally different, upon the supposition of its being otherwise constituted.

IF the sense of sight had been more feeble and confused than it actually is, it would have been necessary to have introduced into the plans of the architect fewer ornaments, and more uniformity; but the contrary rule must have taken place had our sight been more distinct, piercing, and comprehensive. Had our sense of hearing been constituted like those of many other animals, the most of our musical instruments would have required a quite different construction and modulation. It is true, the relations of things to each other would have still continued the same, let the construction of our organs have been ever so different from what it now is; but their relation to us being totally changed, they would not have produced in us the effects they now produce. And as the perfection of the arts consists in their presenting to us their respective objects in such a manner as will render them as agreeable and striking as is possible; so a different constitution of our nature from the present, would, necessarily, require a change in the present state of the arts, adapted to the change which that new constitution would occasion in the means of enjoyment, in the manner of being agreeably affected.

WE are, at first sight, prone enough to imagine, that a knowledge of the various sources of our pleasures is sufficient in order

to the attainment of what is called *taste*, and that the man who has studied the dictates of philosophy upon this subject is a man of *taste*, and may judge with confidence concerning all the productions of nature and art. But this is a mistake: for the *natural taste* does not consist in a theoretic knowledge, but in the quick and exquisite application of rules which, in speculation, may be really unknown to the mind. It is not, for example, necessary to know, that the pleasure we receive from a certain object which we call beautiful is the effect of surprise; it is enough that the object produces its effect, and surprises neither more nor less than is expedient for that purpose.

ALL, therefore, that can be said upon the subject before us, and all the precepts that we can lay down for forming our *taste*, can only regard directly that *taste* that is to be acquired, though they have a distant and indirect relation to the *natural* one. This indirect relation is manifest; for the *acquired taste* affects, changes, augments and diminishes the *natural* one, just as the former is affected, changed, augmented, and diminished, by the latter.

THE most general definition that can be given of *taste*, considered antecedently to its  
division

division into good and bad, is, that it is something which attaches us to certain objects by the power of an internal sense or feeling. This account, however, does not suppose that it may not be applied to intellectual things, the knowledge of which is so delightful to the mind, that it has been looked upon by some philosophers as the only source of true felicity. The soul acquires knowledge by its ideas, and its inward senses or feelings\*; and its pleasures spring from the same sources: for though the latter be generally considered as the inlets of pleasure, and we suppose a total difference between ideas and feelings; yet it is certain that the soul *feels* whatever it *perceives*; and there are no subjects so abstrusely intellectual, which it does not either perceive in reality or in fancy, and which, of consequence, it does not feel.

\* There is a good deal of difficulty in translating the French word *sentiment* by any other term than that of *feeling*. The English word *sentiment* in the singular number may be used methinks to render the French term, and I have ventured to apply it several times in this sense, leaving out the particle *a*, which attaches to it another meaning in our language. But in the plural number we can scarcely make the same use of it, as by *sentiments*, we commonly understand our thoughts and opinions.

*Concerning intellectual excellence in general.*

WIT \*, considered in a general sense, comprehends all the various kinds of intellectual endowments ; such as, genius, good sense, penetration, an accurate discernment, peculiar talents, *taste*.

*The passage that immediately follows this paragraph is extremely obscure : as the translator understands it, the observations it contains are far from being just ; but that no injury may be done to the author by a faulty translation, the passage is here given as it stands in the original.*

“ L'ESPRIT consiste à avoir les organes  
 “ bien constitués relativement aux choses où  
 “ il s'applique. Si la chose est extrêmement  
 “ particuliere, il se nomme *talent* ; s'il a plus  
 “ rapport à un certain plaisir délicat des gens  
 “ du monde, il se nomme *gout* ; si la chose  
 “ particuliere est unique chez un peuple, le  
 “ talent se nomme *esprit* ; comme l'art de la

\* We take the word *wit* here in the extensive sense it bears in the old English authors, and in its original signification, which comprehends all the powers and faculties of the mind. Otherwise it is impossible to express in one word what the author understands by the term *Esprit*, in this passage.

“ guerre,

“ guerre, et l'agriculture chez les Romains,  
 “ la chasse chez *suavages*,” &c. &c.

*Concerning curiosity.*

THE human mind is naturally formed for thinking or perceiving, and *curiosity* is necessary to such a being : for as all things are connected in nature, and every idea and object are in the great chain of being immediately preceded by their causes, and as immediately followed by their effects ; so we cannot desire the knowledge of one object without being desirous also of arriving at the knowledge of those that are intimately related to it. Thus when we see the part only of an excellent piece of painting, we are eagerly desirous of a sight of what remains concealed from our view, and the eagerness of this desire is proportioned to the pleasure we received from what we had already seen.

IT is, therefore, the pleasure which we have received from one object, that carries forward our desires towards another ; hence the mind is always bent upon the pursuit of something new, and never enjoys a permanent repose.

THUS may we always be sure of administering pleasure to the mind, by presenting to its contemplation a multitude of objects, or  
 even

even a greater number than it expected to see.

By these observations we may be enabled to explain the reason, why we receive pleasure both from the view of a regular garden, and also from a rural prospect, in which there is neither order nor proportion. The pleasure we receive from these different objects arises originally from the same cause, even from the natural desire we have of seeing a multitude of objects. This desire renders us eager to extend our views, and to wander from place to place; the mind, under its impulse, abhors all limits, and would willingly enlarge the sphere of its contemplation, and even of its actual presence; and thus one of its great pleasures is, to take in a large and distant prospect. But this pleasure is not easily attained: in towns and cities, our view is obstructed by various ranges of buildings; in the country, it is limited and interrupted by many obstacles. What then is to be done? Why, we must have recourse to art, which comes to our assistance, and discloses nature, which was concealed from our sight: in this case we are more pleased with art than with nature; that is to say, with nature veiled and unseen. But when nature presents itself to us in extensive prospects, in variegated landscapes, where the eye can roam uncontrolled through



through meadows and woods, through rising grounds and flowery plains, the mind is quite otherwise elated and transported with these rural scenes, than with the gardens of Le Notre; because such is the fecundity of nature, that it is always new and original, whereas art copies and resembles itself in all its productions. This also is the reason why in painting we are more pleased with a rural landscape, than with a correct plan of the finest garden upon the earth; because the painter represents nature in those scenes where she appears with the greatest beauty, with the most striking variety; where the eye can ramble at liberty, and behold her in all her charms with pleasure and delight.

THAT which, generally speaking, renders a thought grand and striking, is when the object it represents opens to our view a multitude of other objects with which it is connected, so that we discover of a sudden, and as it were instantaneously, what we had no hopes of knowing without a considerable degree of attention and application.

FLORUS expresses, in these few words, all the faults of Hannibal: *Cum victoria posset uti, frui maluit.*

He

HE gives us an idea of the whole Macedonian war, when he says, *Introisse victoria fuit.*

HE exhibits to us a striking and sublime view of the whole life and exploits of Scipio, when he speaks thus concerning his youth : *Hic erit Scipio, qui in exitium Africa crescit.*

HE paints, in the most lively colours, the restless spirit of Hannibal, the state of the nations, and the whole grandeur of the Roman people, when he says, *Qui profugus ex Africa, hostem populo Romano toto orbe quærebat.*

*Concerning the pleasures which arise from order.*

IT is not sufficient to exhibit to the mind a multiplicity of objects ; it is farther requisite, that they be exhibited with order and arrangement ; for then it retains what it has seen, and also forms to itself some notion of what is to follow. One of the highest mental pleasures is that which we receive from a consciousness of the extent of our views, and the depth of our penetration ; but in a production void of order this pleasure is impeded ; the mind, desirous to supply, from its own ideas, this want of regularity, is perplexed in the vain attempt ; its plan mingles itself with that which the author of the work had formed,

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ed, and this produces a new confusion. It retains nothing, foresees nothing ; it is dejected by the confusion that reigns in its ideas, and by the comfortless void that succeeds the abundance and variety of its vain recourses. Its fatigue is without its effect, and efforts are unsuccessful. Hence the judicious artist always introduces a certain order, even amidst confusion, where confusion is not the main object, the principal thing to be expressed. Hence the painter throws his figures into groups ; and when he draws a battle, represents, as it were, in the front of his piece, the principal objects which the eye is to distinguish, and casts at a distance, by the magic of perspective, the groups where confusion and disorder reign.

*Concerning the pleasure that arises from variety.*

IF order be thus necessary in all sorts of productions, *variety* is no less so ; without *variety*, the mind falls into a lifeless inactivity and langour ; for similar objects appear to it as if they were wholly the same ; so that if a part of a piece of painting was disclosed to our view, which carried a striking resemblance of another part of the same piece that we had already seen, this second part would be really a new object without appearing such, and  
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would be contemplated without the least sensation of pleasure. The beauties we discern in the productions of art, as well as in the works of nature, consisting entirely in the pleasure they administer, it is necessary so to modify these beauties as to render them the means of diversifying our pleasures as far as is possible. We must employ our industry in offering to the eye of the mind objects which it has not as yet seen, and in exciting within it feelings different from those which it may have already experienced.

Thus history pleases by the variety of facts and relations which it contains; romance, by the variety of prodigies it invents; and dramatic poetry, by the variety of passions which it excites. Thus also, they who are well versed in the art of education, endeavour to introduce as much diversity as they can, amidst that tedious uniformity which is inseparable from a long course of instruction.

UNIFORMITY, carried on to a certain length, renders every thing insupportable. The same arrangement of periods continued for a long time, fatigues in a piece of eloquence. The same numbers and cadences become extremely tedious in a long poem. If the accounts given of the famous vista or alley that extends from Moscow to Petersburg  
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be true, the traveller, pent up between these two seemingly endless rows of trees, must feel the most disagreeable lassitude and satiety in the continuance of such a dull uniformity. Nay, even prospects which have the charm of *variety*, cease to please, if they be repeated without much alteration, and are for a long time present to the mind. Thus the traveller who has been long wandering through the Alps, will descend fatiated with the most extensive views, the most romantic and delightful landscapes.

THE human mind loves *variety*; and the reason is, as we have already observed, that it is naturally framed for contemplation and knowledge. If then the love of variety is subordinate and adapted to the attainment of knowledge, it is requisite, that variety, whether in the productions of nature or art, be such as will facilitate knowledge; or, in other words, an object must be sufficiently *simple* to be perceived with ease, and sufficiently *diversified* to be contemplated with pleasure.

THERE are certain objects which have the appearance of variety, without the reality; and others, that seem to be uniform, but are, in effect, extremely diversified.

The Gothic architecture appears extremely  
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rich in point of variety ; but its ornaments fatigue the eye by their confusion and minuteness. Hence we cannot easily distinguish one from the other, nor fix our attention upon any one object, on account of the multitude that rush at once upon the sight ; and thus it happens, that this kind of architecture displeases in the very circumstances that were designed to render it agreeable.

A GOTHIC structure is to the eye what a riddle is to the understanding ; in the contemplation of its various parts and ornaments, the mind perceives the same perplexity and confusion in its ideas that arise from reading an obscure poem.

THE Grecian architecture, on the contrary, appears uniform ; but as the nature, and the number also, of its divisions, are precisely such as occupy the mind without fatiguing it, it has consequently that degree of *variety* that is pleasing and delightful.

GREATNESS in the *whole* of any production requires of necessity the same quality in the *parts*. Gigantic bodies must have bulky members ; large trees must have large branches, &c. Such is the nature of things.

THE Grecian architecture, whose divisions  
are

are few, but grand and noble, seems formed after the model of the great and the sublime. The mind perceives a certain majesty which reigns through all its productions.

THUS the painter distributes the figures that are to compose his work into various groups: and in this he follows nature and truth; for a croud is almost always divided into separate companies. In the same manner, in every complex piece of painting we see the lights and shades distributed into large masses, which strike the eye at a distance, before the whole composition is distinctly perceived.

*Concerning the pleasure that arises from symmetry.*

WE have already observed, that variety is pleasing to the human mind; and we must farther remark, that a certain degree of *symmetry* produces also an agreeable effect, and contributes to the beauty of the greatest part of those complex productions which we behold with admiration and delight. How shall we reconcile this seeming contradiction! It will vanish if we attend to the following observations.

ONE of the principal causes of the pleasure

ture which the mind receives in the contemplation of the various objects that are presented to it, is the facility with which it perceives them. Hence *symmetry* is rendered agreeable, as its similar arrangements relieve the mind, aid the quickness of its comprehension, and enable it, upon a view of the one half of an object, to form immediately an idea of the whole.

UPON this observation is founded the following general rule, 'That where *symmetry* is thus useful to the mind, by aiding its comprehension, and facilitating its operations and its perceptions, there it is, and must always be agreeable; but where it does not produce this effect, it becomes flat and insipid, because, without any good purpose, it deprives an object of that *variety* to which nature has given superior charms. In those objects which are viewed successively, *variety* is requisite; because they are distinctly perceived without the least difficulty. On the contrary, where a multitude of objects are presented to us in one point of view, and rush in at once upon the eye, there *symmetry* is necessary to aid us in forming quickly an idea of the whole. Thus *symmetry* is observed in the front of a building, in a parterre, in a temple; and there it pleases extremely, for the reason now mentioned, its aiding the mind to  
take



take in immediately the whole object without pain, perplexity, or confusion..

THE object which the mind views not successively, but, as it were, by one effort, must be *simple* and *one*; all its parts must unite in forming one design, and must relate to one end. This is another consideration that renders *symmetry* pleasing, as it alone properly constitutes what we call a *whole*, or the effect of a variety of parts that centre in one general design.

THERE is yet another consideration that pleads in favour of *symmetry*, and that is the desire, so natural to the mind, of seeing every thing finished and brought to perfection.. In all complex objects, there must be a sort of counterbalance or equilibrium between the various parts that terminate in one *whole*; and an edifice only with one wing, or with one wing shorter than the other, would be as unfinished and imperfect a production, as a body with only one arm, or with two of unequal length.

### *Concerning contrasts.*

If the mind takes pleasure in *symmetry*, it is also agreeably affected by *contrasts*. This

requires explication, and a few examples will serve for that purpose.

IF painters and sculptors, in obedience to the directions of nature, are careful to observe a certain symmetry in their compositions; the same nature requires that the attitudes which they represent should contrast each other; and thus exhibit an agreeable variety, a pleasing opposition to the eye of the spectator. One foot placed precisely in the same position with the other, or any two of the corresponding parts of the body placed exactly in the same direction, disgust a judicious observer; because this studied symmetry produces a perpetual and insipid sameness of attitude, such as we observe in the Gothic figures, which all resemble each other in this respect. Besides, this uniformity of attitude is contrary to our natural frame and constitution. Nature has not designed that we should imitate in our gestures the stupid uniformity that is observable in the Indian pagods: no, she has given us the power of self-motion, and consequently the liberty of modifying our air and our posture as we please. And if stiffness and affectation be unsupportable in the human form, can they be pleasing in the productions of art?

THE attitudes therefore, particularly of  
such

such figures as are represented in sculpture, must be contrasted, in order to give them an agreeable air of variety and ease. What renders this more especially necessary in sculpture is, that of all the arts it is naturally the most cold and lifeless, and can only affect and inflame by the force of its contrasts, and the boldness of its postures.

BUT as, according to an observation already made, the variety which the Gothic architects were studious to introduce into their structures gave them an insipid air of uniformity; so has it happened, that the variety which other artists proposed effectuating by the means of contrasts, has degenerated also into a vicious symmetry.

THIS is not only observable in certain productions of sculptors and painters, but also in the style of certain authors, who, by perpetual antitheses, form a contrast between the beginning and the end of each phrase. Of this we find several examples in St Augustine, and others, who wrote during the low periods of the Latin language; and also in the writings of several moderns, particularly those of St Evremont. The same cadence or jingle repeated in every phrase is extremely disagreeable and fastidious. *Contrasts* thus multiplied, become intolerably uniform; and  
those

those oppositions that were designed to produce variety, degenerate, by perpetual repetition, into the most tedious symmetry. The mind finds so little variety in this sort of composition, that having heard but one half of a phrase, it will always anticipate the other. There is, indeed, a certain opposition in the words of each phrase; but this opposition is always the same; and the flowing of each period, though harmonious, is yet most fatiguing on account of the constant return of the same kind of *contrasts*.

SEVERAL painters have fallen into this vicious custom of multiplying *contrasts* beyond measure in all their compositions, so that the view of one single figure will enable the acute observer to guess at the disposition of all those that are contiguous to it. This perpetual study of diversity produces uniformity, as has been observed above. Besides, this passion for multiplying *contrasts* has no example in nature; which operates, on the contrary, with a seeming disorder, void of all affectation, and so far from giving to all bodies a determinate and uniform motion, gives to a great number no motion at all. The hand of nature diversifies truly her multifarious productions; some bodies she holds in repose, while she impresses upon others an infinite variety of tendencies and movements.

IF the merely intellectual faculties of our nature determine us to take pleasure in variety, our feeling powers are not less agreeably affected by it. The mind cannot long bear the same objects, the same pleasures, the same situations, if I may use that term, because it is united to a body to which they are insupportable. The activity of the mind, and its sensations and feelings, depend upon the course of the animal spirits that circulate in the nerves; there are, of consequence, two circumstances that suspend their vigour, *viz.* the lassitude of the nerves, and the dissipation of the animal spirits, or their entire cessation.

THUS every thing fatigues us after a certain time: this, at least, is undoubtedly true with respect to those pleasures that are extremely intense; we quit them always with the same satisfaction with which we embraced them; the fibres which were their instruments have need of repose; we must therefore employ others that are in a condition to serve us, and thus distribute equally to the various parts of our frame the functions they are to perform in rendering us active and happy.

THE soul finds its vigour exhausted by any long and intense feeling. But to be destitute

stitute of sentiment or feeling, is to fall into a void, which sinks and overwhelms our better part. We remedy this disorder, or rather prevent this disagreeable alternative, by diversifying the modifications and pleasures of the mind, and then it feels without weariness.

*Concerning the pleasure which is the effect of surprise.*

THE same disposition that renders variety agreeable to the mind, is also the occasion of those pleasures which it receives from *surprise*. This feeling of surprise pleases both from the nature of its object, and the quickness and rapidity with which it acts upon the mind, which perceives either an object it did not expect, or an object presented in a different manner from that which it imagined beforehand.

SURPRISE is excited by such objects as are either marvellous, new, or unexpected; and in those cases where we are struck with the marvellous, the principal feeling is accompanied with an accessory sensation, which arises from this, that the object which we contemplate as marvellous, is also new and unexpected.

HENCE

HENCE games of hazard attract the whole attention of the mind, and affect in a lively and agreeable manner, by presenting to it a continual train of unexpected events : and hence also arises the pleasure we take in those games in which we are associated with partners ; for they are also a combination of unforeseen events, produced by the joint influence of dexterity and hazard.

WE may farther reduce to the same principle the chief pleasure we receive from dramatic compositions, in which we find an important series of events developed by degrees, the most striking occurrences studiously concealed until the very moment of their arrival, all the powers of invention employed to create new objects of *surprise*, and in which we are sometimes affected with a particular kind of *surprise*, upon seeing things fall out just as we might have conjectured beforehand.

WE observe, finally, that the productions of wit and learning are read with eagerness only because they procure us the lively pleasure of novelty and *surprise* ; and thus supply the defect of conversation, which is, almost always, uniform and insipid, and seldom excites the agreeable feeling now under consideration.

SURPRISE

SURPRISE may be excited either by the object itself that is presented to our view, or by the manner in which we perceive it, and the circumstances under which we consider it : for an object may appear, in our perception, greater or less than it is in reality ; it may appear different from what it actually is ; and even in those cases where we see it as it is, we may see it under circumstances which excite an accessory feeling of *surprise*. Thus in the view of any work, the mind may be struck with the circumstantial or accessory idea of the difficulty of its production, of the person that contrived and finished it, of the time or manner in which it was executed, or of any other circumstances that are intimately connected with it.

SUETONIUS recites the crimes of Nero with a certain coolness and tranquillity which astonish, and which almost persuade the reader, that the enormities he describes excited but faintly, if at all, his indignation and horror. But the historian stops short, changes his style suddenly, and says, “ The earth, “ having suffered such a monster to breathe “ upon its surface for fourteen years, abandon- “ ed him at last ; ” *Tale monstrum per quatuordecim annos perpeffus terrarum orbis, tandem destituit*. In this short, but emphatic phrase, the mind is struck with different sensations of *surprise*,



*surprise*, arising from a variety of circumstances. We are surprised at the historian's sudden change of style, at the discovery of his being affected quite otherwise than we at first imagined, and at his describing, in so few words, one of the signal revolutions that happened in the Roman empire. Thus the mind is affected, at one and the same time, by a variety of circumstances, which concur to excite in it an agreeable emotion, and to strike it with a pleasing surprise.

*Concerning the various causes which may contribute to excite a single feeling or sensation in the mind.*

It is necessary to observe, that, generally speaking, every sensation is excited by more than one cause. The force of a sensation, and that variety of feelings into which it may be decomposed, are the result of various and distinct causes ; which, however, operate at one and the same time. The excellence of wit and genius consists in their exercising at once several faculties of the mind, and exciting in it a variety of feelings ; and if we examine attentively the merit of the most celebrated authors, we shall find that it lies principally in this ; and that they please in proportion to the number of feelings which

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they produce at the same instant in the mind.

WE are more pleased with a regular garden than with a confused and crouded heap of trees. But observe the multiplicity of reasons on which this preference is founded : 1. Our view is less confined by the one than by the other. 2. In a regular garden, each walk or alley forms a distinct and grand object, while, in a confused heap of trees, each tree forms, indeed, a distinct object, but only a minute and inconsiderable one. 3. We see an arrangement and disposition of things to which we are not accustomed. 4. We approve, and appretiate, the pains and industry that have been employed. 5. We admire the care that has been taken to combat and correct perpetually the irregular fecundity of nature, which, by new and undesired productions, seems disposed to involve in confusion the works of art ; and this observation is verified by the disgust with which we behold a garden which has been neglected, and suffered to run wild. But farther, we receive pleasure in the productions of art, not only from various, but also from contrary causes : Sometimes we are pleased with the difficulty of a work ; at others it is the facility of its execution that renders it agreeable. We often admire, in the magnificence of a country-feat,

feat, the splendor and profusion of its owner ; and, as often, are pleased with the art which has formed a striking and agreeable arrangement with little labour and expence.

PLAY affects us agreeably, because it satisfies our avarice, and often fulfils the hopes we entertain of making an addition to our possessions ; it flatters our vanity too, by a secret consciousness of our being the favourites of fortune, and by exciting the attention of those about us to our success ; it gratifies, also, our curiosity, by presenting to our view a diversified spectacle of persons, characters, and passions ; in a word, it yields the various pleasures of *surprise*.

DANCING pleases by its nimbleness and rapidity, by the gracefulness of its motions, by the beauty and variety of the attitudes it forms, by its connexion with music, which is so intimate that we compare the dancer to an instrument which plays in concert. But that which renders dancing peculiarly pleasing, is a secret operation of the mind, which reduces all its movements to *certain* movements, and all its attitudes to *certain* attitudes.

*Concerning sensibility.*

MOST objects please in certain respects, and displease in others. The singing *virtuosi* of Italy, for example, are little adapted to please: 1. Because there is nothing surprising in the sweetness of their voices: after the preparations to which they have submitted, they resemble a piece of wood which the artist has curtailed in order to make it produce articulate sounds. 2. Because they can never enter truly into the tender passion which their music is intended to express. 3. Because they neither belong to the sex which we love, nor to that which we esteem. On the other hand, these same persons are not destitute of qualities that render them agreeable in certain respects; as they retain, much longer than others, the bloom and air of youth, and possess a flexibility and sweetness of voice which are peculiar to themselves and to their condition. Thus every object excites a feeling, composed of many others, which weaken each other reciprocally, and are sometimes in direct and violent opposition.

THE mind sometimes augments its enjoyment, by the power of imagination; which multiplies the causes of pleasure by the connexions it forms, and the accessory ideas and perceptions

perceptions it creates. Thus an object that has formerly pleased us, pleases us still ; and that for no other reason, but that it has formerly pleased us, and that we connect the past idea with the present. Thus again, an actress who has delighted us upon the stage, continues also to delight us in a chamber : her voice, her pronunciation, the remembrance of the applauses that crowned her performance, nay, a combination that we imperceptibly form between the idea of her and that of the princess she represented upon the scene ; all this variety, all this mixture, concur in exciting one full and lively sensation of pleasure.

WE are full of accessory perceptions and ideas. A woman of a shining reputation with a small defect, will be able to reconcile us to that defect, and will even have credit enough to make it pass for an ornament. The greatest part of the women we love, have little to recommend them, but the favourable prejudices we entertain of them on account of their birth and fortune, and the honours and esteem that are lavished upon them by certain orders of men.

*Concerning delicacy of perception and feeling.*

PERSONS of a delicate mental frame are

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those who, to every idea, and every sensation, add a variety of accessory ideas and sensations. Gross minds receive no more upon the view of an object than the simple sensation which that object of itself is adapted to excite: they neither know how to compound nor to decompound their perceptions and ideas; they neither augment nor diminish the gifts of nature. The case is quite otherwise with persons of a delicate turn of mind: they refine upon vulgar sentiments, and improve and multiply their agreeable sensations; especially in love, the greatest part of whose pleasures is due to a quick and lively fancy. Polyxenes and Apicius enjoyed at table a variety of sensations of their own creating, which are unknown to vulgar gluttons; and those who judge with *taste*, concerning the productions of wit and genius, have a multitude of perceptions, both natural and acquired, which are entirely peculiar to themselves.

*Concerning the Je ne sçai quoi.*

WE find sometimes, in certain persons, and in certain objects, an invisible charm, a natural gracefulness, which has not been hitherto defined, and which we have been obliged to express by the vague epithet *Je ne sçai quoi*. It appears to me highly probable, that this secret charm is principally the effect  
of

of surprise. We are sensibly touched, when we find certain persons more agreeable than at first sight we imagined them to be ; and we are filled with a pleasing kind of surprise, when we see them triumph over those defects which the eye still perceives, but which the heart no longer feels. Hence we find often, among the female sex, those inexpressible graces adorn the ugly, which are very seldom lavished upon the fair and beautiful. A beautiful nymph generally disappoints our expectations, and appears, after some little time, less amiable than at first sight ; after having surprised us at first by her charms, she falls greatly off, and surprises us at length by her defects : but the first surprise is a past pleasure, which is become faint and languid, and is almost effaced ; whereas the second is a fresh and lively sensation of disgust. Hence it rarely happens, that the beautiful are the objects of a violent and durable passion ; which seems rather reserved for the *agreeable*, than for the *fair* ; for those graces which strike us unexpectedly, and which indeed we had no reason to expect. Sumptuous and magnificent robes are generally destitute of that graceful air which we often find in the simplicity of the shepherd's habit. We admire the air of majesty that reigns in the draperies of Paul Veronese ; but we are almost agreeably touched with the simplicity of Raphael,

Raphael, and the graces that flow from the pencil of Corregge. Paul Veronese promises much, and performs what he promises. Raphael and Corregge promise little, but perform a great deal; and this is doubly pleasing to the surpris'd spectator.

THOSE graces that can render even deformity agreeable, are more frequently centered in the mind, than express'd in the countenance. A beautiful face discloses at once all its charms, and conceals nothing; but an amiable mind shews itself only by little and little, and at such times, and in such a degree, as it thinks proper; it can conceal itself dexterously for a time, in order to shine forth afterwards with a brighter lustre, and to administer that kind of surprise to which the graces often owe their existence.

THE graces are more rarely found in the features of the face than in the air and manners; for these change every moment, and may therefore every moment produce new objects of surprise. In a word, beauty is limited to a certain set of features; but gracefulness may result from an infinite variety of circumstances; so that, if I may so express myself, there is scarcely more than one way of being *beautiful*, whereas there are an hundred thousand of being *agreeable*.



A GENERAL rule of conduct established between the two sexes in all nations, whether savage or civilized, requires, that the first proposal of conjugal union should be made by the men, and that the fair should have nothing more to do than to grant or to reject the tender demands of love; and this very circumstance is a source of graces peculiar to the sex. As they are always obliged to be upon the defensive, they are consequently obliged to conceal their passions, and many of their charms. Under this necessary restraint, the least word, look, or gesture, that breaks loose from its confinement, without violating the natural and primitive law of shame-faced modesty, becomes a grace, and produces a delicious kind of surprise. Such is the wise and excellent constitution of nature, that those things which, without the sacred law of modesty, would have been indifferent and insipid, are rendered most agreeable and interesting, in consequence of that law, which is a source of delicate sensations and refined pleasure to all rational beings.

As affectation and restraint are incapable of exciting surprise, it follows, that gracefulness is neither to be found in those manners that are under the fetters of restraint, nor in those that are the result of a laborious affectation;

affectation; but in a certain ease and liberty that lies between these two extremes, the avoiding of which is a circumstance that surprises the mind in an agreeable manner.

ONE would imagine, that those manners which are the most natural, should be the most easy in practice: but the case is quite otherwise; for, by the restraints of education, we always lose more or less of the ingenuous simplicity of nature, whose recovery yields a high degree of pleasure.

NOTHING strikes us so agreeably in dress, as that negligence, and even disorder, which conceal the pains that have been taken, and keep out of sight all the art that cleanliness did not require, and that vanity alone could employ. In the same manner, wit is only agreeable, when its sallies are flowing and easy, and seem rather luckily hit off, than laboriously invented and far-fetched.

THE man who amuses a company with smart sayings which are the fruits of premeditation and study, will pass indeed for a man of wit; but not of that easy wit which is the spontaneous effusion of nature, and in which alone the graces display their genuine charms. Grace in manners or in discourse appears most in those who are the least conscious

scious of possessing it, and whose plainness and simplicity, promising nothing of that nature, occasion an agreeable surprise in such as at length perceive, in the midst of this simplicity, a quality which they so little expected.

FROM all this we may conclude, that the graces now under consideration are not to be acquired; in order to possess them, we must be natural and ingenuous: and nothing is more self-contradictory, than the attempt of studying to be natural.

ONE of the most beautiful fictions in the Iliad is that of the girdle, which imparted to Venus the power of pleasing. No image could contribute so happily to give us a notion of the secret magic and influence of those graces which seem to be shed upon certain persons by an invisible hand, and which are entirely distinct from beauty. The mysterious girdle could be given to no other than Venus. It was not suitable to the majestic beauty of Juno: for majesty requires a certain gravity, or, in other words, a certain degree of restraint, which is inconsistent with the easy and careless simplicity of the graces. Nor was it better adapted to the bold and haughty air of Pallas; as haughtiness is irreconcilable with the mild sweetness of the graces, and is often liable to the suspicion of affectation.

*Concerning*

*Concerning surprise in its progressive state.*

THE most sublime and striking beauties are to be found in those objects, the first view of which excites but an inconsiderable emotion of surprise; an emotion, however, which continues, augments, and breaks forth, at last, into admiration and rapture. The works of Raphael do not affect us in any extraordinary manner at first sight: his imitation of nature is so exact, that we contemplate it at first with as little surprise as if we saw the real objects he represents; that is to say, almost without any. But the more we examine the sublime productions of that great artist, the more our surprise increases, until it arises into astonishment. In the work of an inferior pencil we are immediately struck with a singular expression, a high colouring, a fantastic attitude, because we are not accustomed to observe them elsewhere. We may compare Raphael with Virgil; and the Venetian painters, with their forced attitudes, may be considered as the imitators of Lucan. Virgil, more natural and simple, strikes less at first view than after an attentive examination. Lucan, on the contrary, strikes at first view, and afterwards affects us little.

THE exact proportion that is observed in  
the

the construction of the famous church of St Peter at Rome, makes it appear, at first sight, less vast and ample than it is in reality; for we know not where to begin, nor on what point we should first fix our eye, in order to judge of its dimensions. Were its breadth less considerable, we should be immediately struck with its length; and were its length diminished, its breadth would amaze us at first sight. But if its vast dimensions do not strike us with amazement at the moment that we cast our eye upon the mighty fabric, the case is quite otherwise when we set about examining it with application and attention of mind: then the eye perceives, as it were, the noble structure expanding itself on all sides; and surprise, gathering force from moment to moment, throws the soul, at length, into the deepest astonishment. Thus the traveller, upon the first view of the Pyrenean mountains, imagines, that his eye takes in their whole extent; but as he advances, he perceives his error, sees new summits arise, and loses himself in the wide and endless prospect.

IT often happens, that the mind enjoys pleasure in consequence of a feeling of which it has no distinct notion, and which arises from its perceiving an object as quite different from what it knows that object to be in

reality. The following example will abundantly illustrate this observation. The cupola of St Peter's is of itself an immense edifice; and it is well known, that Michael Angelo, after an attentive view of the Pantheon, which was the largest of the Roman temples, said, that he would erect a structure of the same kind, with this difference only, that it should be built in the air. He executed, accordingly, the cupola of St Peter's after the model of the Pantheon; but ordered, at the same time, the pillars which supported it, to be made so massy, that the cupola, though, in reality, of a mountainous size, appears quite otherwise to the eye of the spectator. At the view therefore of this noble piece of architecture, the mind remains suspended between what it perceives and what it knows, between the appearance and the reality, and cannot recover from the surprise it feels at the sight of an edifice, which is, at the same time, so massy and so light.

*Concerning those beauties that result from a certain embarrassment and perplexity of mind.*

THE mind is frequently struck with surprise from its not being able to reconcile the past with the present, what it sees with what it has seen. There is in Italy a vast lake, called *Il lago Maggiore*, whose borders are entirely

entirely wild and barren: but, upon sailing about fifteen miles in this little ocean, we find two islands called the *Borromees*, about a quarter of a mile in circumference; and in these distinguished spots, nature seemsto have lavished all those rural beauties that the most exuberant fancy can paint. The mind is astonished at this singular contrast, and recalls upon this occasion the pleasure it has received from the prodigies of romance, where the reader is transported from craggy rocks and barren deserts into smiling landscapes and enchanted ground.

ALL contrasts strike of necessity, because objects placed in opposition set off each other reciprocally. Thus a dwarf in company with a person of a tall stature, forms a contrast that makes the latter appear more enormous, and the former more minute.

ALL these contrasts surprise; and hence the pleasure we receive from antitheses, and other such figures, and in general from all those beauties of nature and art that are produced or heightened by opposition. When Florus says, “ Sora and Algidum, who  
“ would think it! were formidable enemies.  
“ to Rome, Satricum and Corniculum were  
“ provinces: we blush at the mention of  
“ Bovillæ and Verulæ, yet we triumphed o-

“ ver them ; and Tibur, now our suburbs,  
 “ and Præneste, where we fix our rural seats  
 “ of recreation and pleasure, were formerly  
 “ the objects of our ambitious desires, when  
 “ we offered up to the gods our vows and  
 “ petitions in the capitol :” when Florus, I  
 say, expresses himself thus, he shews us, at  
 the same time, the grandeur to which Rome  
 arose, and the small beginnings from which  
 it set out ; and these are two objects, whose  
 striking contrast excites our astonishment.

WE may here observe the remarkable difference there is between an antithesis of ideas, and an antithesis merely of words. The latter is glaring, the former lies in some measure concealed ; the one is always in the same form and dress, the other changes as we please ; the one is diversified and complex, the other is uniform and simple.

THE same historian, speaking of the Samnites, observes, that the ruin of their cities was so terrible, that in his time it was extremely difficult to conceive how this nation could have furnished to the Romans the occasions of four and twenty triumphs : *Ut non facile appareat materia quatuor et viginti triumphorum.* It is remarkable here, that the very same words which intimate the destruction of that conquered people, convey to us



an idea of their unparallelled obstinacy and fortitude.

THE violence of a fit of laughter increases in proportion to the pains we take to stifle it; because there is then a striking contrast between the air and gestures we assume, and those that naturally correspond with the present frame and disposition of our minds. In the same manner, we laugh at the sight of an enormous nose, or any other remarkable defect in a countenance, on account of the unseemly contrast which such a feature makes, when compared with the rest. Hence we see, that contrasts are sometimes the causes of deformity, as well as of beauty. When they are introduced without reason, or when they only serve to expose a defect, and to place it in a striking and conspicuous point of view, then they render an object deformed. *Deformity* produces different effects upon the mind, according to the ideas that are associated with it. Considered in itself, and viewed of a sudden, it excites *laughter*; considered as a misfortune, it excites *compassion*; considered as a mark of some noxious quality, or only in comparison with objects which we are accustomed to contemplate with pleasure and with desire, it excites *aversion*.

*The translator finds the following passage so obscure in the expression, that to avoid all mistakes, he chuses to give it as it lies in the original.*

“ DE même dans nos pensées, lorsquelles  
 “ contiennent une opposition, qui est contre  
 “ le bon sens, lorsque cette opposition est  
 “ commune et aisée à trouver, elles ne plaisent  
 “ point, et sont un défaut, parce qu’elles ne  
 “ causent point de surprise; et si au con-  
 “ traire elle sont trop recherchées, elles ne  
 “ plaisent pas non plus. Il faut que dans  
 “ un ouvrage on les sente, parce qu’elles y  
 “ sont, et non parce qu’on a voulu les mon-  
 “ trer; car pour lors la surprise ne tombent  
 “ que sur la sottise de l’auteur.”

ONE of the qualities that pleases us most in an author is a certain elegant simplicity of style \*. The attainment of this is extremely difficult; because it lies between the sublime and its opposite; but so near the latter, that it is not easy to steer along its border without touching it; or, to speak without a figure, it

\* The French word *naïveté*, which signifies simplicity without meanness, is difficult to be expressed without a periphrasis. We therefore wish that Mr Johnson would admit *naivety* into his Dictionary.

is difficult to maintain this simplicity of style without falling sometimes into a low and vulgar strain.

THE greatest masters in music acknowledge, that those vocal pieces which are performed with the greatest facility are always the most difficult in the composition ; a certain proof this, that there are limits prescribed, both to our pleasures, and to the art by which they are produced.

WHEN we read the pompous and lofty strains of Corneille, and the natural and flowing versification of Racine, we can scarcely persuade ourselves that the former composed with ease, and the latter with difficulty and labour : yet such was really the case.

A LOW and insipid style is the sublime of the multitude, who are pleased with such productions as appear expressly made for them, and which are, at the same time, adapted to their capacities.

THE ideas that arise in the minds of such as are blessed with elevation of genius, improved and directed by a liberal education, are either natural \*, noble, or sublime.

\* *Idées naïves.*

WHEN

WHEN an object is presented to us under various circumstances, or in accessory points of light, that aggrandize it considerably, the complex idea then excited in the mind, may be called noble. This is more especially observable in comparisons; in which the mind must always have its perceptions augmented and multiplied; for comparisons must, in their nature, necessarily add something to their objects, either by heightening our notions of their grandeur, or of their elegance: and similitudes taken from mean objects are carefully to be avoided; for the mind, instead of contemplating them with pleasure, beholds them with disgust, and would have studiously concealed them, had it first discovered them.

WHEN the elegance or delicacy of any subject is to be displayed by similitudes or comparisons, the mind is more pleased with the comparisons that are formed between the qualities, actions, and manners, of the objects, than with those that are drawn between the objects themselves; as when a hero is compared with a lion, a lady with a star, a swift runner with a stag.

MICHAEL ANGELO excelled in giving an air of dignity to all the subjects that exercised his sublime pencil. In his celebrated Bacchus

he has not followed the ignoble *manner* of the Flemish painters, who represent that deity in a staggering attitude; for this would have been unsuitable to the majesty of a god. He has drawn him, on the contrary, firm upon his limbs, and in a steady posture; but, at the same time, has diffused through the whole countenance of the jolly deity such a dissolute gaiety, and such an exquisite air of pleasure and satisfaction at the sight of the sparkling liquor which he pours into his cup, as produces the most agreeable effect.

THE same admirable artist, in a piece which represents the passion of Christ, and is now in the gallery of Florence, has drawn the Virgin standing in an erect posture, and beholding the crucifixion of her son without shedding a tear, or discovering the least mark of affliction or pity. The sublime painter supposes her instructed in the grand mystery of redemption; and therefore makes her support this dreadful spectacle with resignation, and greatness of soul.

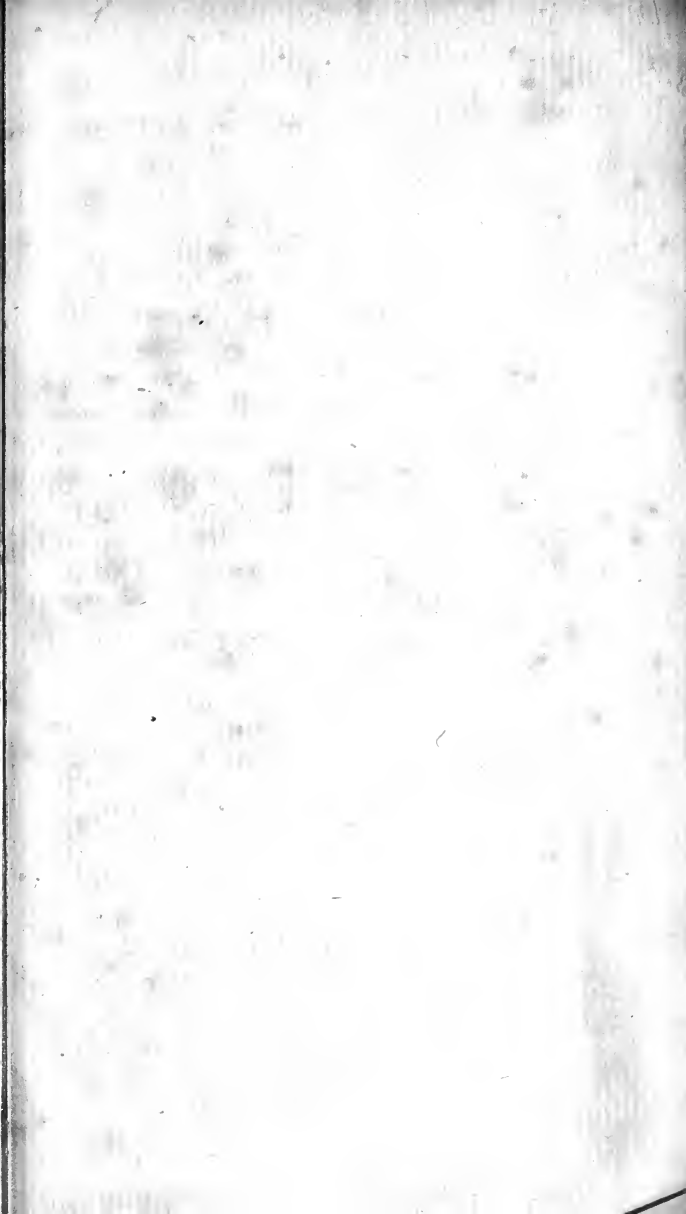
THERE is no production of Michael Angelo which does not bear some marks of the grandeur and elevation of his genius. There is in his very sketches that air of majesty which we find in those lines which Virgil has left unfinished,

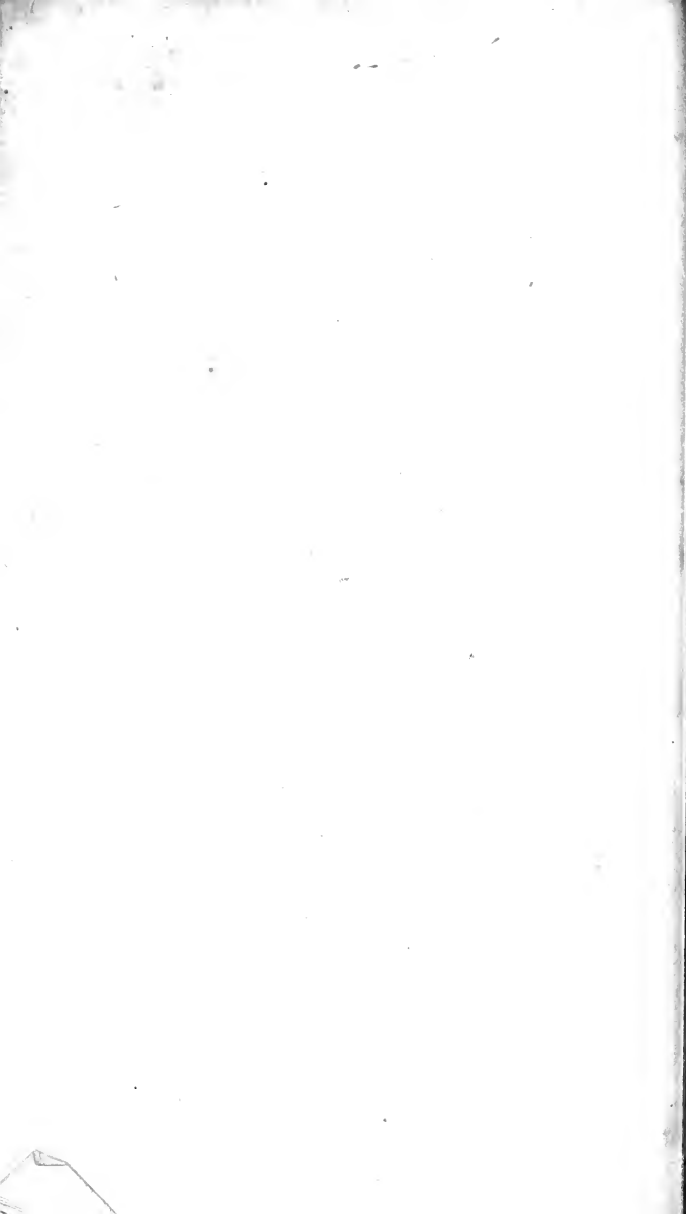
THERE

THERE is a gallery at Mantua, in which Giulio Romano has represented the giants thunderstruck by Jupiter. In this celebrated piece all the gods appear seized with astonishment and terror, while Juno, with an air of tranquillity and fortitude, sits near Jupiter, and points out to him a giant who has escaped his bolts, and whom she intreats to destroy with the rest. By this the artist has given to Juno an air of majesty which raises her vastly above the other deities. We observe also in the same piece, that the terror painted in the looks of the gods is greater or less, in proportion as their places are more or less distant from the throne of Jupiter. This is highly natural; since, in a battle, the proximity of the victor is every way proper to dispel the fears of his troops.

*Here Death snatched the pen from the hand of the ingenious writer.*

THE END.









Imagination 2, 148 ff.

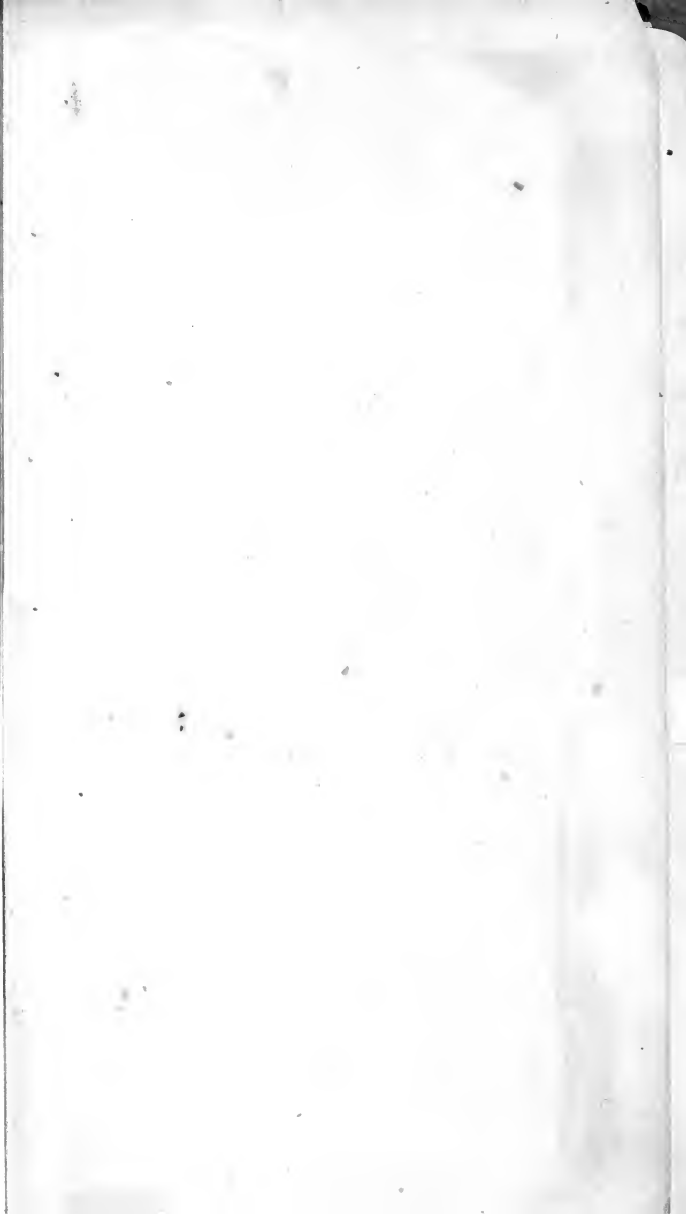
Some distinction of fancy &  
imagination

"the mere creation of fancy"  
(as opposed to a seen and re-  
membered place) but

"imagination gives its form a  
certain proportion, and  
combines them in a certain  
form" (p. 158) But they appear

to be used as synonyms at p. 166-67

"From a confused heap of materials  
collected by fancy... fancy  
will design a regular and  
well proportioned whole" (for  
reference to Aristotle p. 3, 398-9)





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Gerard, Alexander

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An essay on taste 2d ed.

G3

1764

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